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An Epic of Immobility

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The Round Brass Elevator—a story

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Cleopatra—a story

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The Intricate Argentine

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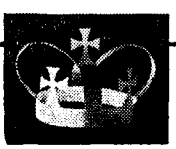

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KENNETH CLARK

The Value of Art in an Expanding World

FOR THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS most people in the Western world have accepted the belief that the value of art depends on a kind of exalted happiness which it alone can produce. A few social philosophers have tried to maintain that art should influence conduct, but in fact we know that it does not do so. At most we can say that it furnishes the mind with certain symbols which may be of value to our moral and spiritual life. We have come to accept this position and have supposed that moralists like Ruskin and Tolstoy, who wished to relate art more directly to human welfare, were barking up the wrong tree. At the same time we have demanded that the values by which we live should be definable in more or less measurable terms and we have come to reject those values that depend solely on mystique, authority and tradition. Curiously enough this drift of opinion does not seem to have influenced our conception of art. No one can measure or justify its effect, but it is still held in awe by millions of people who have never experienced it directly. It is the most mysterious example of minority rule in the whole field of human activity.

Can this curious situation be maintained? At first sight it would seem that there has never been a time when works of art have been so highly valued. I am not thinking primarily of the vast prices which they fetch at auctions: this is an economic question involving many complex factors, scarcity, surpluses, prestige and even the shortage of labour that prevents rich people from spending their money on large estates and yachts. I am thinking of the enormously increased attendances at museums and galleries, the sales of expensive books and the general air of prosperity and demand that surrounds the production and distribution of art.

But turn from the active to the contemplative sphere and one finds that never has there been a time with so little confidence in absolute values. The criteria by which works of art are judged become every day more uncertain, as the works themselves become

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more remote from direct experience. The language of criticism grows more incomprehensible and gives the impression that the critic is hiding his own bewilderment in a succession of complicated metaphors; and historians of art, to whom we might reasonably turn for a stable set of values, have washed their hands of the whole question. They study works of art as documents, irrespective of the qualities which, in the end, make them worth studying; they examine problems of iconology which can be illustrated just as well by a bad work of art as by a good one. And, in general historical terms, they adopt a relativist position, which considers all values in art as matters of fashion.

This is a dangerous state of opinion, because it encourages cynicism and reaction. In spite of the spread of art galleries and the proliferation of art books, art is still very much the preserve of a minority, and if a sort of Luther were to arise, and, in the name of common humanity, point a scornful finger at the paraphernalia of art, conspicuous waste, as Veblen called it, he might well bring down the whole elaborate structure, unless the believers in art could produce a rather more solid body of doctrine than they seem able to do at present.

It is significant that in considering the present uneasy state of art, one should invoke the name of a religious teacher. The view that art has become a sort of substitute for religion has been rejected by all serious critics. T. S. Eliot considered it one of the most insidious heresies of the nineteenth century. But the fact remains that in a godless age and in what we call a free society, art is the only escape from materialism which is not subject to the law of diminishing returns, and one of the few which is not damaging to health. The moment of selfless joy which we experience in front of a work of art is no doubt less intense than the rapture of the saints. The most fervent art lovers have not yet undergone martyrdom. But artists like Gauguin have come near to it and I think it would require something not far short of torture to make me deny that Cézanne was a good painter, whereas I have no views at all as to whether socialism or capitalism is the better economic system, and would cheerfully vote for either. Even if art is not strictly comparable to religion, it has become the chief focus of that part of human activity which, by a labour-saving linguistic short cut, we may still call spiritual; and to lose our faith in it would be to create a dangerous void. Yet lose it we shall, if we

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lose our sense of values, and try to cover up the loss with metaphor and with endless researches into insignificant problems.

I think it is worth while examining this situation, not with the hope that there is much we can do about it—because conditions of this kind have to work themselves out like the common cold—but because it is usually better to know where we stand in relation to the general historic process. There seem to be a number of factors involved, operating on various levels, which are probably all symptoms of the same general drift. The first of them can be described in one word: expansion. The existence of a clear, stable and creative scale of values in art coincides with periods which are enclosed by a dome of clear and workable assumptions. All the great consistent styles have arisen in such periods. Occupied as we now are, by differentiations and changes of fashion, we tend to overlook the underlying unity and long duration of such styles. We can see that little change took place in Egyptian art for 2,500 years, and that the decorative clouds of the T'ang dynasty seem very similar to those of the Manchu emperors. When we look at Western European culture we are chiefly aware of the differences; and it is of course true that since the twelfth century the European mind has been possessed by a fearful restlessness, which before concentrating on science showed itself in art and architecture. But even so, the artificial and irrational forms invented in fifth century Greece have proved as deeply rooted and as tenacious as anything in the Far East. The architectural idea of the Greek Temple, a wooden chalet rendered in stone, might seem illogical enough to have faded out soon after its appearance. In fact it had an unbroken existence for seven hundred years; and more than two thousand years after its invention it was still being used for the construction of temples by the very faith which had destroyed its original purpose. The Church of the Madeleine in Paris was finished 2210 years after the Parthenon.

In such survivals there is, of course, an element of inertia. To discover and perfect a new form that shall impose itself on posterity requires colossal energy, as well as conviction. Nevertheless, such cultural survivals would not have been possible without a continuity of basic assumptions. The clear and workable assumptions which, till quite recently, controlled our scale of values, were not, as is sometimes supposed, Christian, but classical. After the Renaissance it was assumed that antiquity furnished a pattern for

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the arts, as it did for human behaviour, and although there were rebels against the oppressive standards of classicism, it remained the norm. The first fluttering acceptance of mediaeval art was no more than embroidery on the surface of classic structure. As Pugin said of the Houses of Parliament: "All Grecian, sir. Tudor details on a classic body." The assimilation of the Gothic style, together with Chinoiserie, Turquerie and Singerie, pierced the enclosed world of classical belief, but by the middle of the century critical historians like Charles Blanc and Eastlake had achieved a synthesis of values which still provided the hierarchy of taste on which most of us were brought up. Visitors to London may remember a curious structure, looking like a gigantic version of a Gothic ciborium, which was erected a hundred years ago as a monument to the Prince Consort, husband of Queen Victoria. Albert had been a great patron of the arts, and round the base of his memorial there was carved a marble frieze of painters, sculptors, architects, musicians and writers. Of the 169 figures chosen by Eastlake to represent the arts in 1865 there is hardly one whose greatness and appropriateness we should question today (except that Delaroche appears instead of Delacroix). The artistic merits of the Albert Memorial are not usually rated very highly, but, in spite of the incursion of mediaeval art, the scale of values it proposes is comprehensive, stable and convincing. The fact is that Gothic art was still the product of an evolved civilisation; its philosophic method was still rational—extravagantly rational—and still looked back to Plato and Aristotle. The expansion of values which accompanied the romantic movement, although it had a questionable influence on architecture and the decorative arts, did not violate our sense of cultural unity. The real break came in the early years of this century when certain painters and critics found the qualities of great art in the work of primitive people. I am not denying that they did discover such qualities. The finest pieces of Negro or Polynesian carving are indeed great works of art. But the fact that we can feel this about the work of people with whose culture we have nothing in common, whose mental processes are almost wholly irrational and whose basic assumptions are entirely incomprehensible to us, represents a crucial change in our whole philosophy of art.

The discovery of primitive art was, at first, associated with a revolution in aesthetics which had been brewing for some time.

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According to the new philosophy our response to works of art no longer involved a focus of intellectual and spiritual activities, but was a sensation, a kind of electric shock, unique and isolated from all other forms of experience. The merits of primitive art were a convenient illustration of this theory, and were consequently much exaggerated. To this was soon added the discovery of children's art, which was supposed to be equally spontaneous and have similar freedom from distracting associations. The discovery of monkeys' art belongs to a later phase of the same process, and raises rather different questions.

I need not examine the fallacies inherent in this way of thought; they have become obvious enough. My point is that the vast expansion of what can be taken seriously as art, led to a confusion of values and the aesthetic philosophy, of which it was the symptom, gave no indication of how this confusion might be resolved. To take a metaphor from another order of human experience, one may say that the artistic values of the eighteenth century were based on a kind of civil law, and when, in the mid-nineteenth century, this was stretched beyond its capacity, its place had been taken by a kind of natural law. This metaphor has the advantage that by 1850 the word nature had taken on an almost religious meaning. The 'laws of nature,' which in the eighteenth century had meant little more than probabilities based on normal experience, now meant to Ruskin, or for that matter, to Walt Whitman, God's law for the conduct of the universe. This is the mental background of Constable's Wordsworthian nature worship, Courbet's realism and the Impressionists' preoccupation with light. But they were still connected with the eighteenth century laws by their confidence in the old humanist adage, frequently asserted by the first art-theorist of the Renaissance, Leon Battista Alberti, that "nature will always act consistently in all her operations."

In the present century this confidence was shattered by the expansion of the physical world—by the final incomprehensibility of the infinitely large and the infinitely small. It is a curious fact of history that whereas great artists have shown themselves uninfluenced by social or religious systems (minor artists of course have often conformed), they have always responded instinctively to latent assumptions about the shape of the universe. The mediaeval craftsman may have been almost illiterate, but his sense of space somehow reflects the logical complexities of Dantesque Cos-

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mogeny; the Renaissance artist conceived his forms, and situated them, in accordance with the measurable areas of Euclidian geometry; and when Galileo had established that the earth was no longer at the centre of the universe, the vanishing point of pictorial perspective began to be placed outside the edge of the frame.

In all these epochs the universe seemed, if not comprehensible, at any rate realisable through some kind of symbolic projection. But quite early in the present century it became clear that no symbolic rendering of the universe could be close enough to the new data to have the smallest validity. As J. B. S. Haldane said, "my own suspicion is that the universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we *can* suppose." Now, this feeling that the condition of the cosmos cannot even be stated symbolically and that, by our standards, it seems to be as incoherent as divine justice, was bound to have an effect on the sense of form and the sense of space. Kandinsky in his *Reminiscences* has left us a vivid, though ultimately misleading, account of an artist's response to the triumph of contemporary physics. "The crumbling of the atom," he says, "was to my soul like the crumbling of the whole world. Everything became uncertain, tottering, weak. I would not have been surprised if a stone had dissolved in the air in front of me and become invisible." To understand the strength of Kandinsky's emotion we must remember the almost religious status which seventeenth century scientists had conferred on the atom. "So very hard," as Newton said, "as never to wear or break in pieces: no ordinary power being able to divide what God himself made one in the first creation." Kandinsky's memoirs were written in 1913, and in that year both Mosley and Niels Bohr had deprived the atom of some of its monomorphic dignity. No doubt their experiments were known to Kandinsky and seemed an exciting confirmation of his own pictorial needs. Nevertheless, I think that his statement is misleading, because he goes on to claim that this was the moment of liberation which allowed him to paint completely non-objective pictures. "Science," he says, equating science with the laws of nature, "science seemed to be destroyed. Its most important basis was only a delusion, an error of the learned." This is nonsense. Moreover Kandinsky had painted his first abstract pictures a year or two earlier, and the decisive influence was probably the French fauve painters of 1905-6.

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In studying the history of art, the interplay between scientific or intellectual trends and what I may call professional movements within the arts themselves, has to be treated with great caution; and some intoxicating analogies are best resisted. For example, Kandinsky's statement has encouraged writers on modern art to claim that there is an analogy between the splitting of the atom and the splitting up of the objective image. But, apart from chronological difficulties (and the anticipation of science by art is not unknown), this looks to me more like one of those word games which the hard-pressed critic finds convenient. The two processes exist in such different spheres of intellectual activity that they have very little, or nothing, in common.

The complete suppression of the external object came about when the aesthetic philosophy of sensation attached to itself the epithet 'pure.' In 1913 Malevich produced his famous white square on a white ground, and defended it with the words "by suprematism I understand the supremacy of *pure* feeling in creative art," adding, "Everything that determines the objective ideal structure of life and of art—ideas, concepts and images—all this the artist has to cast aside in order to heed pure feeling." A few years later Mondrian extended this approach to a more intellectual idea of art, which he called "the mutual interaction of constructive elements and their internal relations." "This process," he says, "consists in mutual purification; purified constructive elements set up pure relationships, and these in their turn demand pure constructive elements."

You see that in my attempt to find out how a credible scale of values in art has been lost, I have been drawn into the problem of modern art. I would gladly have avoided a subject on which it seems to be almost impossible to say anything either sensible or new. Moreover, abstract art has been supported with such passionate loyalty that any attempt to view it with detachment is immediately interpreted as an attack. But in this study of values some reference to modern art is inevitable. Ultimately, it is the living art of our time and the personal tastes of dominant artists which redirect our appreciation of the past and govern what we call taste. In the last thirty years contemporary painting has played an active role in the liquidation of values by its constant change of aim. But through all the ups and downs of fashion, the main drift has been clear. It has been, and continues to be, towards

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an even greater abstraction, an even more rigorous suppression of the objective visual experience. Kandinsky, Malevich and Mondrian remain the prophets of our present phase. Has anything like this happened before?

Well, as a matter of fact, it has. The iconophobic impulses, which both Byzantium and Islam took over from Judaic culture, although obviously different in many respects, show enough points of resemblance to be worth examining. For one thing they were primarily an aesthetic phenomenon, and appeared in art before they appeared in dogma. The heart had gone out of representational-figurative art in all the Syrian, Judaic, Coptic and North African world before images were formally condemned by the church fathers and centuries before they were prohibited by Islam; and secondly, when image making was attacked it was in the name of *purity*. God is a spirit, to be apprehended immediately; and any attempts to represent him by an image, or even by a symbol, is to degrade the divine essence. I am not sure how far the author of the second commandment had this in mind: more probably he was simply anxious to preserve the unity of his tribe. But this was certainly the ideal of the church fathers of Syria, Africa and Spain, and when it was abandoned by Gregory the Great, in about the year 600, we may say that the Roman Church had accepted that alliance with pagan antiquity which it has maintained till the present day. Of course, it would be a mistake to equate this early iconophobia with puritanism, as we have come to understand the word. The decoration of St. Sophia, the most splendid church in Christendom, was originally without any figurative representations, and this was probably due to the influence of the Empress Theodora, who had been educated in Alexandria. No puritanism in her set. Equally, we cannot associate the ethos of the Pilgrim Fathers with that of the Caliphate, although both of them eschewed images. This Syrian iconophobia was based on purity of *sensation,* in which the sensuous immediacy of art gained force by being deprived of recognition and the complex train of associations which the figure arts arouse. But although we cannot call imageless art puritanical, we can properly call it anti-catholic, something outside the main classical tradition and, to a large extent, something revolutionary, militant and intolerant.

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Cautiously examining the analogy between fourth-fifth century iconophobia and modern art, we are struck with one important discrepancy. The imageless art of Syria, Egypt and Constantinople was primarily decorative. Its effect on the human mind was subordinate to its function as part of an architectural whole. The capitals in the Coptic Museum in Cairo are great works of art, but they appeal, in the most narrow sense, to the aesthetic emotions. They have practically no intellectual content and cannot be called a form of communication. This is a serious limitation, and was felt to be so at the time: hence the inclusion, among the decorative motifs, of Christian symbols, and in Islamic art, of texts from the Koran—although Cufic script is in itself so superbly decorative that this may be considered cheating. Now the non-representational art of the last fifty years has vigorously denied the charge that it is decorative: and in its recent phases has claimed that it is essentially a communication. An apologist of tachism has said, "What we want to know is not what the world looks like, but what we mean to each other": obvious enough in tachism; but even the most austere constructions of abstract art express personal convictions. We often say in criticism of someone's character that "he lacks a sense of proportion," and when this trite metaphor is given concrete and visible form we must accept it as a true communication of personality.

But in spite of this serious discrepancy, the points of likeness are considerable and, I think, valid. The most striking is the insistence on purity. I have already given examples from the prophets of modern painting; I may add to them the prophet of modern music, Arnold Schoenberg. In his opera *Moses and Aaron*, which he thought of as his crowning achievement, Moses, the exponent of the pure word of God, is betrayed by his brother, who believes that the word must be revealed through images. It was Schoenberg's intention to end the opera with the triumph of Moses, but he could think of no conclusive arguments and the third act was never written. Perhaps only Spinoza could have provided an adequate libretto.

This notion that a spiritual experience, whether received through the senses or through the intellect, must be pure, although psychologically an exceedingly dubious concept, has had a recurring fascination for the European mind, and has often (Cis-

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tercians, Quakers, etc.) led to the suppression of ornament as well as of images. Perhaps we may say that modern architecture is to some extent a reflection of this state of mind. In modern painting it became involved with other factors—the vulgar rivalry of the camera and exhaustion of nineteenth century academism. All these factors combined to make it an art of revolt against the conforming centre; and since for over fifty years almost every movement which was at first attacked or derided was later valued and praised, the idea has taken root that to be ultimately valuable a work of art must be initially shocking. A certain amount of modern art cannot really be accounted for on any other principle. Needless to say there is nothing in the history of art earlier than 1860 to support this view, and I would not mention anything so ephemeral were it not certain that this unconscious argument has played a part in the formation of contemporary taste.

Since the conventional view of painting was—and perhaps still is—that it should represent objective reality, and since academic art was encumbered by a repertoire of trivial observations, it was natural that an art of revolt should feel bound to purify itself from the detritus of normal perception, and the drift of fashion coincided with the more profound urge towards purity and abstraction.

I have elsewhere suggested a third reason for the specialised character of modern art, the ascendancy of science. I am now inclined to question how far this theory is valid. It is true that in the middle ages and the Renaissance science and art were much closer together than they are today, because one of the functions of art was to convey information about the visible world; and as science became more specialised and drew away from normal means of perception this unity (with many others) was inevitably lost. But one must admit that science was already specialised in the nineteenth century, and the nineteenth century produced a quantity of great artists. However, I think it is true to say that as science has become more specialised and more abstract, so art has felt the need to make its own realm purer and more inaccessible. To anticipate a discovery of physics by a mathematical equation is a feat of intelligence which seems to require of art something more than mere observation.

Such then, would be my summary of our present situation, and if it is correct you will see why modern art has contributed to our

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uncertainty of values. The word pure, although very far from precise when applied to a work of art, is not without a shadow of meaning. It implies that the work in question affects us primarily through its form and colour, and that the elements of memory and association which it contains are so completely absorbed in the form and colour that we are only aware of them unconsciously. To take a concrete instance, we may say that a Matisse collage is 'purer' than a Matisse odalisque, meaning that in the collage the odalisque has been swallowed, although she can be recognised in the curves of a piece of blue paper by those who know Matisse's earlier work. Evidently the 'purer' an art becomes the less easily can it be judged by ordinary human standards. The more a spiritual experience becomes immediate the less it is dependent on tradition. As I have said, modern art is, in a large sense of the word, anti-catholic. Not only does it abandon that alliance with the physical world and that need to digest every scrap of human experience which has nourished the Catholic church; but historically it has been promoted by artists from outside the nursery of traditional art, the northern shores of the Mediterranean. Two of its founders, and several of its chief living representatives come from a country which was supposed to have no tradition of painting at all, from Russia; and it seems to me doubtful if abstract art would have lasted so long if it had not taken root in the virgin soil of the U.S.A. Let me hasten to add that I am not forgetting the very considerable American artists of the nineteenth century. But neither Eakins nor Winslow Homer can be said to have been at the creative centre of the art of their time; whereas today the abstract painters of New York are.

Now tradition is without doubt the most comfortable source of values, and the old Catholic maxim, *securus judicat orbis terrarum*, is still a first step towards understanding. At all times tradition saves one a lot of anxiety, and never more than at a time when matter is changing its composition and the universe its shape in a way that very few of us can understand, but with results which all of us have reason to dread. And yet we know that to pretend to believe in a dead tradition is one of the least fruitful forms of pretence. *Orbis terrarum* meant simply the Mediterranean, and our secure judgements must be based on something very much wider.

Where can we find a new basis of value? What, in the expand-

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ing universe, have we got left? We have ourselves. It is through human qualities, after all, that man has extended himself beyond his own comprehension, through his memory, his ability to draw inferences, his willingness to co-operate, and his imagination. All over the world men have the same needs, the same means of perception and the same emotions. They respond to the same rhythms and dream the same dreams. The discovery of primitive art, which did so much to shake the values of the classical tradition, is also one of the most moving proofs of the unity of mankind. Thus the problem of values becomes a problem of interpretation. We can perceive in the arts of every culture certain qualities of form, of design, of aesthetic purpose which seem to transcend differences of social and economic organisation; and these formal qualities must, in the end, be the visible expression of human experience. It is our duty to interpret them. We cannot all read an abstract work of art as Ruskin could read a Byzantine capital or as Riegl could follow the evolution of the palmette; but with a little help we can come much nearer to it than we suppose. The very metaphors of popular speech show an amazing power of abstraction. We have no difficulty in recognizing weakness or strength, nobility or meanness, in the shape of a pot, if it is pointed out to us.

This leads me back to a point I touched on earlier, the responsibility of art historians for the collapse of values. As the old humanist tradition became untenable they abandoned the function of criticism or evaluation, giving as their excuse the amount of research still to be done on the available evidence. It is true that we have collected a formidable quantity of evidence. Our museums are stuffed to capacity, far beyond the needs of the average visitor; and photography has added a mountain of documentation, convenient and deceptive. But sooner or later the pleasant ritual of classification, with its small certainties, must give place to the labour of analysis, and the hazards of synthesis. We need great historical interpreters of form like Ruskin, Riegl, Wölfflin, Dvorak and Focillon.

I say "historical" because only by grouping and analysing the art of the past can we recognise those elements which are lasting and universal; and I say "form" because, in the study of mankind, subject divides, form unites. The fact that all over the

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world, and at every stage of culture, men have felt a need to impose forms of order on the chaos of visible experiences, and that we can recognise the value of these forms intuitively, without knowing anything about the circumstances that produced them, should be reckoned one of the great discoveries of the last fifty years. The appreciation of primitive art, which seemed at first to have contributed to the displacement of values, should in the end be the basis of a new humanism. Unfortunately, the aesthetic theory which accompanied this discovery, the notion that this universally valid sense of form must be a sensation unconnected with other human experiences, was an error. No doubt there will always be in our response to works of art some physical feelings that will resist analysis: the scent of the rose. It was Ruskin himself who said "sculpture is essentially the production of a bossiness or pleasant roundness." But to call this physical quality 'pure' and to claim that it alone is the source of aesthetic pleasure is a fallacy. Even the most primitive art is suffused with human emotions. In a recent exhibition of Negro carvings in Paris, I was struck less by the plastic qualities which had so forcibly impressed the painter of the *Demoiselles d'Avignon,* than by their nobility and pathos.

The critical point in all interpretation is precisely the point at which experience becomes form; and it is as elusive as the moment when we actually fall asleep. But what should we say of a biologist who gave up further investigations because the secret of life was said to be impenetrable? Of course, the art historian's work has become more complex, not only on account of the accumulation of evidence, but because of the more elaborate tests to which works of art must be submitted. If we allow that the creative moment is modified by innumerable memories and associations, then we must use, in our analysis, all the analogies that can help us through this uncharted sea. Symbol and gesture, ritual and play, mythology and psychology, patterns of animal behaviour, all these must be related to works of art, not merely to unriddle subjects, but to elucidate form. At the end of it all we shall only find out what we know already by instinct. But we shall at least have produced ammunition to use against the present uneasy scepticism which has shaken our sense of values.

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VICTOR BROMBERT

An Epic of Immobility

"La plastique est la qualité première de l'art."
—Flaubert

1. *The Debauches of the Imagination*

THE OPENING CHAPTER OF *Salammbô,* with its orgiastic barbarian feast and the ethereal appearance of the patrician virgin, plunges the reader into an acrid and dreamlike world. This combination of brutality and almost mystic disincarnation is characteristic of Flaubert's poetic imagination. The African dream had long haunted Flaubert. Already in *La Tentation de Saint Antoine,* which he temporarily set aside, but which continued to take new shapes in his mind, Flaubert had exploited the metaphorical potential of his African image. The exotic dream goes back to his early adolescence. It was not merely literary—although literary fashions, and in particular Victor Hugo's *Les Orientales* did much to inflame his imagination—but deeply felt and psychologically explosive. The long voyage through Egypt, Syria, Palestine in 1850 only confirmed Flaubert in his view of this continent as the theater of the elemental mysteries of life, where sex was related to infinity and death, where a permanent original creation was also close to permanent undoing and nothingness, and the dawn of religions announced the twilight of the gods.

It is not surprising that a work founded on such an excessive, almost delirious appetite for the forgotten and the unknown should have met with incomprehension. Since it was not a traditional "novel," it soon became fashionable to treat it as a piece of historical research, and to condemn it on those grounds. A pedantic archeologist, Froehner, set out to prove that Flaubert's archeological reconstructions were sheer invention.[1] As though these reconstructions were not merely a pretext, a safe-conduct to the regions of dream! Readers still tend to view the novel as a museum of dead objects. Critics who believe that authentic documentation

[1] *Revue contemporaine,* 31 December 1862; 15 February 1863. Flaubert wrote a spirited point by point rebuttal which revealed the extraordinary range of his historical research.

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is irrelevant in a work of fiction are appalled by the pedantic pretense at historical veracity. In his attempt to capture the poetry of History, Flaubert had—it was felt—sterilized his own imagination. He was thus accused of betraying history for fancy, and at the same time of allowing pedantry to crush his imagination.

Contradictions such as these made it convenient simply to dismiss the work as a "historical novel," blaming Flaubert for his choice of a period—the world of Carthage—about which we know almost nothing. For there exists no "contact" in *Salammbô*: the enigmatic nature of the characters only seems to underscore our basic indifference to the ruthless struggle between Carthage and its mercenaries, as well as our almost total lack of knowledge of the society Flaubert set out to resuscitate. Georg Lukács believes that *Salammbô* illustrates the decline of the historical novel: dehumanizing monumentality, emphasis on objects and on the picturesque rather than on human situations, irrelevant social and historical context.[2]

These accusations are not altogether unjustified. Yet even a prejudiced reading of the novel reveals an extraordinary control over the literary material. Flaubert is not only a fine painter of crowds —the most remarkable before Zola—but a superb painter of landscapes. The vaporous sunsets and dawns so typical of Mediterranean cities; the immensity of a land, harsh and voluptuous, swept by heavy breezes, bathed and refreshed by moonlight and soon after scorched by the desert sun; the glaring light distorting or even abolishing all sense of distance, and transforming the sea into melted lead—these images, as well as those of the terraced and undulating city of stone and ivory offering itself to the glance like an opulent cornucopia, make up the very texture of the book. And they are not gratuitous. If the forms of the hills are compared to the swollen breasts of women, it is because this vision correponds to the sexual languor and obsessions of the barbarians, who themselves, just like the landscape, surrender alternately to hedonistic indolence and to uncontrollable crises of savagery.

Equally impressive is the dream-like atmosphere which suffuses some of the key scenes, and which bestows upon them an almost surrealistic logic and necessity. "Tanit," the chapter devoted to the nocturnal theft of the sacred veil (the "Zaïmph"), is an initiation into the inner chambers of the temple as well as into

[2] *The Historical Novel*, London, Merlin Press, 1962, p. 199.

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the secret recesses of the author's imagination. The furtive theft somehow corresponds to a deep compulsion. The oneiric imagery is at times quite explicit. In a suffocating atmosphere, Mâtho walks between two parallel galleries where heavily tattooed women sleep on mats like reclining idols. Later, as he rushes up the large stairs toward Salammbô's room, Mâtho experiences that "strange ease which one feels in dreams."

But the most overwhelming impression left by *Salammbô* is one of nightmarish brutality for which, because of the clearly erotic associations, there is no better word than sadism. Prisoners into whose faces pebbles are thrown to make them cry out in pain; writhing bodies whipped to death to the accompaniment of the lions' roar; panting women tearing the flesh and piercing the eyes of captives—these are familiar scenes in *Salammbô*. Were the brothers Goncourt really unfair when they remarked in their *Journal* that Flaubert, whose mind was haunted by the Marquis de Sade, had an undue appetite for turpitude? From his correspondence, especially during the period of the novel's composition, it is quite clear that he enjoyed immensely the idea of his *"truculente facétie"* shocking the bourgeois reader. Almost triumphantly, he announces to his friend Feydeau that he is now tackling the gorier passages, that his protagonists begin to walk through disembowelled guts.

Salammbô reads indeed like a compendium of atrocities. Mutilation is almost the key image of the novel. The ferocious battle-elephants of Carthage, with torn-out bowels hanging from their tusks, seem to symbolize the prevailing brutality. Even vampirism and cannibalism find their way into the book. But the most characteristic mode is one of lascivious cruelty which inflames the mind and the senses of both sides in this relentless war, and which shows up, in its acutest form, when Mâtho's living body, at the end of the novel, is being slowly torn to shreds by an entire population. Women let their nails grow especially for this occasion.

The horror becomes at times so intense, so oppressive, that Flaubert suggests an immense nausea. Thus the starving Barbarians, trapped in the pass of the Battle-Axe, soon give up feeding on the rotting corpses of their dead comrades. The horror has been too great. The stench of decomposition stings the nostrils, troubles the eyes, penetrates the very skin. "An immense disgust over-

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whelmed them. They would have no more of it. They wanted to die."

The death-dream is paralleled by an obsession with disease. Hanno's leprosy—his unsightly ulcers and crusts, his greenish flesh all in shreds, his stench covered by precious perfumes—corresponds to a deep-rooted obsession with pathology already evident in Flaubert's earliest writings, as well as in *Madame Bovary*. "I feel a need to dissect," he confesses to a friend. And he explains: "It is strange how attracted I am to medical studies." Just as later, when writing *L'Éducation sentimentale,* he was to visit the Sainte-Eugénie Hospital to observe children suffering from croup, so during the composition of *Salammbô* he undertook research on various afflictions, particularly on the ravages of thirst and hunger. Perhaps this dedication to the pathological represents an effort to rid himself of his obsessions and to exorcise the evil spirit of Sade. "I disembowel men with prodigality, I spill blood, I write in a cannibalistic style. . . ." There is something compulsive in the very tone of Flaubert. The goriness and carnage of the novel may well betray a yearning to transcend animality.

But whether Flaubert's poetry of horror represents a permanent trait of his psychology to which he here surrenders with relish, or whether the stress on the sanguinary is symptomatic of a redeeming struggle with his own demons, the result is one of sensationalism. The romantic tirade and the taste for the spectacular are the two traits which most sharply distinguish *Salammbô* from *Madame Bovary*. There is something histrionic, and even operatic, about the entire work. The feast of the Mercenaries during which Salammbô emerges on the upper terrace, the return of Hamilcar and the crowds thronging the steps of the Acropolis, the brazen colossus appearing like a prop out of *Aïda,* the hierarchical cortèges proceeding to the rhythm of cymbals, castanets and tambourines—all these scenes of movement and monumentality seem to unfold on an outsized stage to the accompaniment of trumpets and choral effects. *Salammbô* has unquestionably the makings of a Hollywood extravaganza.

Is it fair, however, to dismiss *Salammbô* as a dazzling display of images by a writer endowed with a talent and propensity for debauches of the imagination? Is dazzlement all that is sought and achieved?

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2. *The Death-Feast and the Thirst for the Unattainable*

The shimmer and hardness of precious stones introduce the reader into a world of plastic forms. The novel begins in an almost artificial light, as the moon and the campfires are reflected on hard, glittering surfaces. The entire first chapter suggests alternately the chiselled, polished forms of the goldsmith, and those, heavy, solid and immobilizing, of the sculptor and the architect. The bronze-like massiveness only helps bring out the delicacy of gems. The metaphorical unity of tone is obvious. The entire description of the orgy in Hamilcar's gardens stresses artifact. It also stresses a mixture of animalism and of a dehumanized plasticity of "pure" forms. The captains wear bronze cothurnes; the monkeys on the trees are scared by wavering lights, burning in the porphyry vases; oblong flames tremble in brazen cuirasses; in their drunkenness, the soldiers toss to each other ivory stools and gold spatulas. Even the sound effects in this opening chapter are tinkling or metallic. The clinking of cups, the crash of Campanian vases, the limpid ring of large silver plates mingle with the crunching sound of the soldiers' jaws.

Nature itself, in this first scene, appears transmuted into a work of art, indeed *petrified.* Not only is the black sand mixed with powdered coral, and the sunlight described as a "rain of gold," but an avenue of cypress trees is metamorphosed into a double colonnade of green obelisks. If objects have a life of their own, life in turn is here made inert and immutable. This death principle is illustrated by Salammbô's song, telling of Masisabal's decapitated head, attached to the prow of a ship, and which the combined action of the sun and the sea water embalmed and made "harder than gold."

The taste for the tableau further contributes to the sense of immobilization. And so does the imperfect tense which seems to imprison the action in an eternal present. *"C'était à Mégara, faubourg de Carthage, dans les jardins d'Hamilcar."* This carefully balanced first sentence of the novel imposes its weight and seems to offer no issue. The lion pit, as well as the audible presence of the *ergastulum,* with its imprisoned slaves and clattering chains further conveys a feeling of claustration. This immobilization extends to vegetation (the trunks of trees become "blood-stained columns") as well as to human beings. Mâtho, at the end of the

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chapter, stands motionless, having assumed an almost statuesque pose. Indeed, throughout these opening pages, as well as later in the novel, men assume sculptural traits or stances. Even the sea appears immobilized and solidified, "*figée*" (congealed). Nature itself—just as the sacred fish with precious stones in their gills—is thus denatured. Behind the entire opening passage, one senses an attempt to translate living and unstable forces into the arrested patterns of art.

This immobilization of life is paralleled by an inverse tendency, but one whose effect is paradoxically similar: movement bestowed upon the motionless and even the lifeless. Thus verbs of action are made to serve as verbs of description. The landscape seems to act out a geometric ballet: the conical roofs of hectagonal temples "stand out" in the early dawn, houses "climb up" the slopes, "mass together" like a herd of black goats "descending" the mountains, the streets "stretch out," the palm trees "jut out" beyond the walls. At times, the entire setting seems to propel itself into motion.[3] At others, inanimate objects seem to palpitate with life: glass bowls reflecting the light of the torches become "enormous throbbing eyeballs."

As a result of this double tendency (immobilization of life and animation of the inanimate) the distinction between the organic and the inorganic almost vanishes, and *being* and *becoming* tend to merge. The very techniques exploited by Flaubert in the first chapter of *Salammbô* point to some permanent and important features of his work: Nature transformed into Art; a dehumanization and bestialization of man (at the orgy, the soldiers imitate the cries and leaps of ferocious animals); the permanence of Death as suggested by a petrifaction of life; a predilection for the statuesque and the lapidary which corresponds to a horror of the amorphous and to an inner struggle between the stable and the unstable; a fusion of movement and immobility symbolizing a cosmic rhythm and necessity.

Some of Flaubert's central themes and obsessions thus emerge in the very first pages of *Salammbô*. The exotic repast is not merely sensational or decorative. As is so often the case with Flaubert, food and appetite, which mean life and nourishment, also point to death. Discontent, violence and destruction are in-

[3] Benjamin Bart sees an intimate relationship between this mobility of Flaubert's landscape and his "pantheism." (*Flaubert's Landscape Descriptions*, p. 44.)

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timately associated with carnivorous greed and the processes of digestion. The Mercenaries eat, "leaning on their elbows, in the tranquil pose of lions devouring their prey." Indeed, animals of prey constitute a permanent presence, and a permanent metaphor, in *Salammbô*.

Food and destruction do not represent an arbitrary association. The "*cupidité des estomacs*," as Jean-Pierre Richard suggests, does point to a thirst for the absolute.[4] The multiple dishes representing every possible culture and an almost infinite variety of mores are indeed like invitations to a global voracity. But soon the relative and the absolute clash, as the appetite proves far larger than the capacity to digest. The drunken eyes of the soldiers seek to "devour with their glances" all those things which they lack the power to seize and carry away. Impotence leads to exasperation. And just as sexual excess is bound up with a secret yearning to dissolve, consume and ravage, so here the orgy of food and drink leads up to a "vertigo of destruction" which whirls over this drunken army and impels them to strike, break and kill at random.

From the very beginning, "total" forces seem to be at play. The first chapter, in its very structure, opposes the feminine softness and mystical lasciviousness of the Moon and the hardness and fierceness of the Sun. The dialectic of the eternal couple, Tanit and Moloch, is indeed at the core of the novel. The scene opens as night falls. When Salammbô appears, she is, in her softness and pallor, like an incarnation of the lunar principle. Her pallor is in fact attributed to the moon. And her movements as well as her effect on the assembled men derive from lunar influences. This voluptuous and provocative Moon-Tanit is met by the aggressive and destructive male force of the Sun-Moloch.

The death-feast, the vertigo of destruction and the omnipresence of absolute forces locked in fierce battle remain permanent realities in *Salammbô*. The opening chapter, so high in color and movement, is thus not merely of dramatic, but of proleptic interest. It also points to some of the most fundamental Flaubertian themes: the theme of sacrilege and the theme of inaccessibility. The Mercenaries' impulse to "devour with their glances" what they could not seize and possess corresponds to the Flaubertian

[4] "La Création de la forme chez Flaubert" in *Littérature et Sensation*, pp. 117-219. According to Richard, the Flaubertian "voracity" is basically tragic.

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nostalgia for the unattainable. Its keenest manifestations, in these opening pages, occur when Mâtho, transfixed, looks up longingly at the distant Salammbô. And this separation not only represents the distance—political and social—which separates them ("She is remote and inaccessible!"), but prefigures the final scene of the novel, when Mâtho, inexorably drawn to his hated love, dies at the foot of the terrace, staring at the figure of Salammbô above the balustrade.

3. *A Parnassian Epic*

Inordinate dreams (or nightmares) assume plastic concreteness in *Salammbô*. The book must ultimately be judged as a poem. But not in the flippant terms of Gide, who speaks in his *Journal* of the "disarming childishness of the poet." The poetry of *Salammbô* goes beyond a mere quality of the imagination. It echoes a pressing inner music, and expresses itself through complex rhythms, by means of a language in which words themselves become palpable, sensuous realities. Flaubert, moreover, clearly set out to explore the poetic potential of French prose, which he felt could achieve a hitherto unsuspected beauty. To Louise Colet, at a time when he was still busy writing *Madame Bovary*, he confided his dreams concerning a new prose style which, without ceasing to be "prose," would combine the virtues of artful rhythms and an almost scientific precision.

The words "poem" and "poetry" indeed found their way repeatedly—and quite naturally, it would seem—into the critical opinions of those contemporaries who were able to appreciate *Salammbô*. Leconte de Lisle praised it as a "beautiful poem." Hector Berlioz referred to it as "an invention of the highest poetry." And J. M. de Hérédia, perhaps the most representative poet of the school known as the "Parnasse," hailed Flaubert as the "*schalischim* of poets," and compared the novel to a "temple of granite, covered with precious marble. . . , blending all its ornaments into a general magnificence. . . ." The very terms of Hérédia's comparison seem to place Flaubert's work squarely among the Parnassian poets.

The practice and ideals of this group—as illustrated by writers such as Théophile Gautier, Leconte de Lisle, Théodore de Banville, and Hérédia—marked a reaction against the highly personal and sentimental effusions of the first wave of Romantic poets.

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Lamartine's lachrymose, mellifluous and vaporous reveries, but even more so the histrionic and self-pitying playfulness of Alfred de Musset, were the favorite targets of this poetic reaction. The "romantic" nature of this anti-romantic group explains in part their affinity with Flaubert. They too extolled impassibility as a cardinal virtue in art. For the Parnassians, artistic perfection was to be sought in plastic effects. Hence the importance of the statuesque nude and the permanent search for a purity of sculptural lines. Théophile Gautier, for whom both Baudelaire and Flaubert felt much admiration, was from childhood on drawn to the plastic arts. Even when singing the beauty of the human hand, he felt compelled first to lend it the statuesque firmness of a sculptor's plaster cast. Firmness of line and of outline is indeed one of the characteristics of Parnassian poetry. The polished craft of the goldsmith, the glitter of jewels, the hard aristocratic surface of marble are recurrent images.

Sculpteur, cherche avec soin en attendant l'extase,
Un marbre sans défaut pour en faire un beau vase

advises Banville.[5] And Gautier, whose poem "L'Art" is a true Parnassian credo, praises the beauty of Paros marble and calls for a poetic art whose sculpted and chiselled beauty can be achieved only through the artist's victorious struggle against a highly resistant material. The very titles of so many Parnassian works (*Emaux et Camées, Les Stalactites, Améthystes*) betray this concern for a hard and almost icy perfection which the Symbolist poets were soon to condemn.

The very choice of Carthage as a subject for a novel is symptomatic of a double Parnassian tendency: on the one hand, the desire to resuscitate a past through a combination of research and archeological intuition; and on the other, the focussing on a civilization so distinctly out of touch with the world of modern Europe as to insure an almost hermetic purity. As for the other Parnassian traits, they are even more obvious. *Salammbô* seems conceived under the very sign of the "plastic" emotion. Flaubert's invocation at the end of his travel notes on Carthage (*"A moi, puissance de l'émotion plastique! résurrection du passé, à moi, à moi!"*) clearly indicates the spirit in which the novel was conceived. The sculp-

[5] *Les Stalactites.*

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tural and architectural metaphor almost becomes a mannerism in *Salammbô*.

The architectural obsession is particularly striking. Numerous passages suggest a real choreography of geometric figures and patterns. The three levels of a tower are like three "monstrous cylinders." One of Hamilcar's apartments is built in the "form of a cone." At times the accumulation of geometric figures becomes truly oppressive. Early in chapter four, Carthage is viewed as a vast amphitheater of "cubic" houses: it is "mountain of blocks," with innumerable "intersecting" streets which "section" it vertically, and where emerge, here and there, enormous flat spaces of walls ("*des pans énormes*"). Viewed from the vast "quandrangular" court, the temple of Moloch is an "architectural mass." Not even Robbe-Grillet, with his compulsive taste for measurements and his predilection for lines and surfaces, has been more addicted to geometric images.

Even more ubiquitous are the images of precious gems, of sophisticated jewels—almost a museum display. ("I wallow in precious stones like a pig," Flaubert writes to his friend Duplan.) These images cluster around the key motifs of the novel, and in the first place the natural phenomena, among which the most important is of course the Moon. The shafts of its light bring out luminous glints, striking the gold necklace of some idol or the globes of glass glittering like enormous diamonds on the roofs of temples. The sea also, symbol of feminine caprice and fecundity, assumes a mineral quality: after the heat of the battle, it appears to Mâtho like a flat pavement of lapis lazuli. But even more characteristic is the association of precious stones and architectural effects. At the entrance of the temple of Tanit, a stone cone stands between a stele of gold and a stele of emerald. Inside, stone phalli appear. And the coveted veil of the Goddess, the sacred Zaïmph, close to a semi-spherical black stone and to an erected ebony cone, appears like a cloud of scintillating stars, "diaphanous" and "glittering." The described reality is here transmuted into a permanent metaphor.

This raises an esthetic problem. Does Flaubert's metaphoric style correspond to a metaphorical vision? This in fact, as Harry Levin points out, is the very dilemma of Parnassian poetic practice: imagery seems deprived of "perspective" in a land where

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metaphors come true.[6] The emphasis on poetic jewelry work, this tourism through a kingdom of stone, have of course an immediate dramatic and thematic relevancy. But what ultimately matters is not the concrete application of this imagery, nor even the peculiar eroticism dependant on the taste for the *clinquant* and which recalls Baudelaire's love of sonorous jewels, but the abstract, almost metaphysical potential of these images and rhythms. For the novelist's predilection for ternary rhythms, his massive and magnifying ends of chapters, as well as the use of ponderous adverbs frequently concluding a sentence—all bring about, no less than the lapidary imagery, a *fixation* of movement. An uncanny sense of immobility pervades the novel. Though the fortunes of war, the displacement of troops, the proliferation of battles suggest agitation, the overall impression is one of stasis and futility. The very fact that dialogue between the culture of Carthage and our own is not possible contributes to this sense of stasis and even of constriction. Perhaps it is one of the reasons why Flaubert was secretly drawn to a historical period which remains locked on itself. Certainly, the very structure and texture of *Salammbô* convey this combination of frenzy and immutability. No scene is more characteristic of the mood of the novel than the end of "Le Défilé de la Hache" where the "bored" lions, who have fed on the corpses of the trapped army, lie satiated and "motionless as the mountains or as the dead." This combination of violence and of tedium represents a predominant feeling in *Salammbô*.

For the "bored" pose of the lions corresponds to an almost Baudelairean sense of *ennui*. Their yawns, which throughout the book accompany the cries of tortured men, are symptomatic—much like Baudelaire's "*monstre délicat*"—of an immobilization of life and of a chronic yearning for destruction. ("Ah, you understand what a horrible bore existence is!" Flaubert wrote to Baudelaire admiringly.) Flaubert's own penchant, ever since his adolescence, led him to a poetry of ennui, combining dreams of infinity with a sense of despair. "I feel nothing but immense and insatiable desires, an atrocious ennui and continuous yawns," he confides to his friend Ernest Chevalier. Much of *"Bovarysme"* seems to to be implicit in this cry of frustration, in this diagnosis of his *acedia*. Moreover, the desire to create a poetry of ennui crystallizes, it would seem, around exotic images—images of the

[6] *The Gates of Horn*, p. 277.

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Egypt Flaubert discovered, or wanted to discover, during his long trip in 1850. "An immense ennui devours everything," he writes to Louise Colet, "when I will write Oriental poetry . . . that is what I will stress."

Yet Flaubert's "oriental" poetry is not limited to the impassive yearning for a perennial stillness and mystery. The paradox of Flaubert's vision is that the very immobility seems to be in motion: monotonously, mercilessly rolling like the huge, clumsy tower construction, the outsized *helepolis* used during the siege of Carthage, which, on its iron-bound wheels, moves forward slowly toward the walls of the city like a mountain meeting another mountain. It is this sense of the hopeless continuity of eternal sameness—symbolized by the irresoluble tides of war and by the equally relentless struggle between Tanit and Moloch—which more than any other single factor endows the novel with a certain epic grandeur.

Contemporaries—provided they were well disposed—did indeed refer to the epic qualities of *Salammbô*. *"Beaucoup trop de bric-à-brac, mais beaucoup de grandeurs épiques. . . ,"* Baudelaire wrote in a letter to Poulet-Malassis. Théophile Gautier, in an article published in *Le Moniteur,* sums up his evaluation of the work: "It is not a book of history; it is not a novel. It is an epic poem!" Similarly, Théodore de Banville praised the book as a "true epic narrative of modern times." Flaubert himself, during the slow process of gestation and composition, repeatedly referred to *Salammbô* as an "epic" enterprise. "I have an epic itch" (*"des prurits d'épopée"*)—is Flaubert's diagnosis of his condition after years of immersion in the petty, provincial world of *Madame Bovary*. He now needs air and space: *"grandes histoires"* and *"grandes gueulades."* In one of the scenarios for the novel, he plans a "picturesque and epic enumeration" of all the African tribes. The epic, as a genre, had long fascinated him. To read the *Iliad* in the original was one of his dreams, and for years he deluded himself into believing that he was about ready to undertake this. As for the *Aeneid,* he was quite appropriately perusing it while working on his Carthaginian novel.

Even more than details of battle, conflicts of men and animals (the two, at times, are almost interchangeable) and the omnipresence of Gods, idols and monstrous images, it is the very atmosphere of the book which inevitably conjures up epic

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reminiscences. Like its illustrious predecessors, *Salammbô* is a "mediterranean" poem. When Flaubert, in one of his most spectacular light– and landscape scenes, describes the dawn over Carthage ("Toward the east a luminous bar appeared . . .") one recalls the Homeric "rosy-fingered dawn." A certain poetry of History emerges, which is based not so much on respect for sources as on a sense of the grandiose and the "collective." And the military action reveals not only the atrocious deed, but the exemplary and heroic one. As for the craft and cunning which traditionally temper and civilize the physical exploit, this element is here embodied by that decadent Ulysses, the former slave Spendius, who appropriately is also a Greek. In a context of total surrender to passion, whether that of love or of destruction, Spendius represents the cunning mind.

Above all, however, it is the style, the very syntax of Flaubert, which brings about a characteristic wedding of Parnassian sensibility and epic massiveness. The paratactic use—and abuse—of conjunctions, the reliance on conjunctive locutions (*tandis que, pendant que*), have a cumulative and broadening effect. The action advances, and yet it seems part of the same immense, unchanging tableau. Adverbial articulations (*puis, alors*) introduce a certain "primitiveness" into the narration, create a link of necessity between contingent events, and provide a sense of the *crescendo*. The abundance of conjunctions is of course a chronic mania with Flaubert, one against which, on numerous occasions, he felt compelled to wage ruthless war; but it does serve here to create an epic rhythm. This tendency is further accentuated by strikingly characteristic epic similes which seem to derive straight from Homer or Virgil:

> Like a pruner cutting off willow branches, endeavoring to lop off as many as possible in order to gain more money, he advanced mowing down Carthaginians on all sides of him.
>
> . . . Swinging his heavy shoulders covered with furs, he reminded his companions of a bear leaving its cavern in the spring to see if the snow has melted.

But the most significant epic "device" in *Salammbô* is Flaubert's own ability to fuse action and description, his skill at transmuting an action in progress into a seemingly arrested tableau. This mixture of movement and immobility is best illustrated by the alto-

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gether original use of the imperfect tense to describe a finite action:

> . . . Hamilcar tira deux larges coutelas; et à demi courbé, le pied gauche en avant, les yeux flambants, les dents serrées, il les *défiait,* immobile sous le candélabre d'or.

This gesture of defiance, which according to all the customs of French syntax would require a preterite, or *passé simple,* is here fixed, and so to speak liberated from contingency, by the *imparfait* of description. This grammatical transposition no longer shocks us: the Naturalistic writers, in the wake of Flaubert, have often exploited it. Basically, it is a painter's device, and corresponds historically to a period when literature often attempts to rival its sister art. The immediate effect of this syntactical anomaly is to immobilize movement into a pose, and to provide a sense of statuesque grandeur. Suddenly, all human action seems to be amplified and projected against an immense, almost universal screen.

The basic "unit" of *Salammbô* is unquestionably the sexual image as crystallized around the divine couple Tanit and Baal, and as symbolized by the cosmic polarity of Moon and Sun. On the human level, Salammbô embodies the spirit of Moon-Tanit, while Mâtho incarnates the Sun-Baal. Such images and such concepts are, however, somewhat abstract. Flaubert very deliberately textures his novel with a profusion of sensuous images—all of which support the basic erotic motif. Odors (good and bad), scents, exhalations are evoked with particular frequency. Whether the emanations of sweaty crowds, or the mixed smells of perfumes, leather and spices, these stifling sensations all contribute to a latent lasciviousness. The association is often explicit. Thus Mâtho, about to ravish Salammbô, dilates his nostrils to breathe in more freely the perfume exhaled from her body. "It was a fresh undefinable emanation which nonetheless made him dizzy like the fumes from a censer. She smelled of honey, pepper, incense, roses, and yet another odor." This evocation of an *odor di femmina* has upset many prudish readers.

Characteristically, Flaubert exploits images of warfare for what might be called sexual effects. The siege of a town and the possession of a woman are almost set up as explicit parallels. Openings, breaches, battering-rams are among the recurrent, almost

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obsessive images. The motif of *penetration* (into the temple of Tanit, into Salammbô's room, into the city of Carthage) is particularly insistent. Mâtho and Spendius discover a "breach" in the city-wall, they find a "slit" in the temple wall, they "penetrate" into a small round room, they discover a "narrow opening," they enter into a "narrow passage," they glimpse "small openings." The entire chapter describing the nocturnal penetration and profanation of the temple of Tanit is filled with similar suggestions. On occasion, as with the scene describing the mystic deflowering by the sacred serpent, the images are distinctly obscene (". . . its body, shiny and bright, gradually emerged like a blade half drawn from the scabbard.") The erotic use of the snake-image again occurs in the tent scene, when the golden chainlet between Salammbô's ankles snaps and the two ends fly apart, striking the tent "like two leaping vipers." The image recalls the frantic undressing of Madame Bovary in the hotel room, when the thin corset-lace is made to whistle about her hips "like a gliding viper."

But the sexual imagery points to larger and more significant themes. Mâtho, literally bewitched, experiences love as an initiation to destruction and to death. He is oppressed by his own boundless desire, his very being seems to dissolve in an irresistible torpor, "like those who long ago have partaken of some potion of which they must die." Love is here linked with the idea of a fateful inebriation. Above all, the love-motif corresponds to a spiritual malady recurrent in the works of Flaubert. The sexual quest thus becomes the physical expression of a self-destructive yearning for the unattainable absolute.

Repeatedly, sex and annihilation are linked in *Salammbô*. The martial context only stresses this association. But even the less military passages provide images of undoing. The scent of Salammbô is "more fragrant than wine and more terrible than death" (the language is almost Biblical!). The fertility symbols in Tanit's temple, the perfumes and the exhalations "overcame" Mâtho. This sense of *accablement,* of succumbing to a weight, pervades the scene of the symbolic love-ritual with the serpent. "Salammbô panted under this great weight; her loins gave way, she felt that she was dying." The sex and war imagery, already predominant in the opening chapter, provides the connective texture which from the "*vertige de destruction*" of the Mercenaries' feast leads

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to Moloch's "possession" of Carthage, and finally to the sadistic killing of Mâtho.

Death and destruction are thus the price for impossible dreams. For what really counts in *Salammbô*—as in most other works of Flaubert—is the drama of an impossible desire. This quest for the unattainable, this boundless appetite for that which can never be seized, and much less appropriated, is without a doubt the main tragic theme of the novel. The permanent presence of walls is a reminder not only of Salammbô's almost holy virginity, and of the distance which separates the Carthaginian patrician girl from the foreign plebeian, but of all sense of *distance* and indeed of the very notion of inaccessibility. And it is revealing that Flaubert had the high priest Schahabarim fall in love with Salammbô. A eunuch, he is condemned to consume himself in a hopeless and sterile desire.

The notion of sacrilege, so recurrent in *Salammbô*, acquires its full meaning in this context. For sacrilege—whether the soldiers' killing of the sacred fish or Mâtho's violation of the temple—ultimately proves to be a mad enterprise. A fundamental prohibition places the coveted object beyond reach. Mâtho knows it, and, during the entire expedition in search of the sacred veil, the very idea of sacrilege haunts him and terrifies him. It is as though the Flaubertian hero himself felt the instinctive need for barriers that would set a limit to his dangerous desires.

We are coming close here to the very core of the Flaubertian sense of tragedy. For "*Bovarysme*" is not merely—as Jules Gaultier put it—the wishing oneself other than what one is. It is an almost metaphysical eroticism: "desire" in its essential form. And it implies a condemnation to an unmedicable sadness—the kind of sadness which, on the most sordid level, Mâtho experiences when he attempts to satisfy or forget his desire with the handmaidens of Tanit. Prostitution with Flaubert is, as it were, the "negative" of an ideal image. It is also the symbol of a reality which condemns life to betrayal and unfulfilment.

All the typical stages of "*Bovarysme*" are rehearsed in *Salammbô*. The first period of the disease is a state of vague exaltation, which combines sensuous and spiritual aspirations. In a revealing letter written to his friend Bouilhet in 1850, Flaubert hesitates between three equally tempting subjects. The first is "a

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night of Don Juan." The second is the story of Anubis, the woman who wants to be loved by a god. The third is the novel of a mystic Flemish virgin who lives and dies in her provincial town. Quite clearly the last project is echoed in *Madame Bovary* and in *Un Coeur simple,* and the story of Anubis eventually became part of *Salammbô*. But what is more interesting than mere concern for origins, is that the three projects, though superficially very dissimilar, bear a fundamental resemblance to each other. All three stories, dealing with the double form of love (sensuous and spiritual), were to illustrate *"l'amour inassouvissable"*—insatiable love.

Thus vague exaltation leads to an almost hysterical surrender to sensation, in quest of that precisely which refuses to be possessed. The second stage in this tragic disease is marked by an ungovernable tension, an almost demented, convulsive distortion of the sensibility, resulting in paroxysms of possessiveness. Obstacles only exacerbate this ferocious desire. Mâtho begins to dream of "terrible and extravagant things," while Spendius frantically strives to invent "frightful engines of war such as had never been constructed before." The Flaubertian protagonist, in this assault on the impossible, in this attempt to violate a secret, is doomed to will violence and his own destruction.

The madness of love—for love, with Flaubert, is a "madness," a "curse," a "malady"[7]—is linked both to a predilection for the unbounded and to the fundamental impotence of all desire. The debauches of the imagination infallibly bring about a sense of sadness, tedium and even disgust. The mystic virgin who commits a sacred prostitution to recover the Zaïmph is also the woman who discovers the bitterness of dreams come true. *"Elle restait mélancolique devant son rêve accompli."* This quasi-metaphysical sadness becomes most oppressive at the very moment the dream seems realized. Emma Bovary experiences the same mournful disenchantment. A sense of emptiness and despair invades the Flaubertian heroine as she measures the permanent distance that separates her chimera from reality. Paul Bourget diagnosed the disease of *"Bovarysme"* most accurately when he saw it as a dramatization of the law which condemns satisfaction (*jouissance,* in the largest sense) to be forever out of harmony with desire.

Bourget's diagnosis, developed in one of the best of his *Essais*

[7] See the letter to Sainte-Beuve (*Corresp.,* V, p. 59).

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de psychologie contemporaine, is relevant because it raises the entire question of desire and frustration to a philosophical plane. The disproportion and lack of harmony become symptomatic of an intellectual disease, indeed of the very *disease of intellect* by which modern civilization is being slowly eroded. Emma Bovary, Salammbô, Frédéric Moreau, Saint Antoine, Bouvard and Pécuchet—all of them are victims of their own nefarious imagination, all of them have "known the image of reality before reality."

Salammbô, like all of Flaubert's works, insists on the bewilderment and abdication of reason in the face of a devastating multiplicity of phenomena. The very first scene, with its unending variety of dishes and tribal habits, betrays an encyclopedic obsession. This mania for inventories appears throughout the novel. And Africa, the exceedingly fecund breeding ground of races and religions, was an appropriate symbolic setting for this obsession with polymorphism. The apocalyptic *défilé* of gods, beliefs and heresies in *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* also takes place on African soil. Flaubert obviously enjoys displaying his erudition or pseudo-erudition. The parade of colorful details is, however, not aimed merely at creating picturesque effects. The stage of this implacable war becomes a museum of artifacts, as well as a graveyard of civilizations. And knowledge itself—or the catalogue of knowledge—turns out to be no more than a symbol of sterility.

The figure of Schahabarim embodies this sterility. The eunuch-priest who betrays his Goddess has been everywhere and learned everything. His curiosity and knowledge extend to natural sciences as well as theologies. But the result of this intellectual tourism is idiosyncrasy and perverse indetermination. Intellectual aridity leads to all manner of heterodox aberrations. At the end of the novel, lonely and spiritually crippled, Schahabarim places himself entirely in the service of horror and extermination. Flaubert's taste for excess, his obsession with the proliferation of forms and concepts always points to a simultaneous love and terror of the monstrous. He observes in *Notes de voyage* (II, p. 356) that excess "is a proof of ideality." But it is also—in the Flaubertian context—a principle of annihilation, and as such one of the most permanent tragic themes of his works. Polymorphism —perpetual change and modification—is bound up to its corollary: nothingness.

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The attraction to Nothingness is indeed the ultimate stage of the tragic sickness which erodes the spirit of all Flaubert's protagonists. *Salammbô* is not merely a book of death, but of annihilation. In retrospect, all the characters—much like the survivors of the entrapped army—appear like "half-opened tombs, living sepulchres." But the frenzy of destruction, the consuming desire to "*anéantir,*" the "*vertige*" which makes the destroyer lose himself in that which he destroys, overshadow the simple reality of death. It is characteristic that the battle-orgy, when all the butchery is done and the soldiers are wearied from too much slaughter and screaming, ends in a collective desire for sleep.

Images of torpor and numbness correspond to a profound feeling of dejection, a heaviness of heart, an unredeemable discouragement. "The situation was unbearable, above all because of the idea that it would become worse." Carthage's predicament aptly sums up the prevailing pessimism and gloom of Flaubert's total vision. Flaubert himself has alluded to the despondency which permeates the very conception of this novel. "Few people will guess how much sadness was necessary to undertake the resuscitation of Carthage!" In fact, it is worse than mere "sadness": the emasculated priest of Tanit, having betrayed his cult, is left without a faith—a priest without God. Flaubert's own sense of anguish seems to parallel that of Schahabarim. His writings exhale a chronic blasphemy against the very principle of life. And like all true blasphemies, Flaubert's not only imply an apostasy (and the accompanying regret for the recused faith), but a deep and permanently frustrated taste for the absolute. Did not Flaubert call himself a mystic who was unable to believe anything?[8]

This perverse combination of mysticism and nihilism makes of much of Flaubert's work, and of *Salammbô* in particular, a forerunner of "decadent" art. *Salammbô* appears indeed as a direct precursor of some of the fin-de-siècle creations of Huysmans, Wilde, Mallarmé and Moreau. The glorification of the Barbarians, which in *Salammbô* appears most clearly in the scenes of their epic courage in death, is of course one of the most recurring "decadent" motifs. Tired races, like the spiritually exhausted senators and consuls in Cavafy's "Waiting for the Barbarians," have a secret hope that the Barbarians will soon arrive. The entire nineteenth century, especially after the first wave of romantic poets,

[8] *Corresp.*, II, p. 412.

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liked to think of itself as a somewhat bloodless over-civilized civilization that had reached its period of decline. The Latin decadence was a frequent subject of meditation, and poets considered Paris the capital of a new *"Bas-Empire."*

Salammbô is thus representative of a moral and intellectual climate. But it is also very much a *roman personnel,* a novel expressing some of the most intimate attitudes and yearnings of Flaubert. Far from being the marginal work, the eccentric aberration that some readers saw in it, the novel about the greatness and horror of Carthage is indeed central to an understanding of some of the most permanent obsessions of Flaubert. Were the thought not so heretical, one might even venture to say that in many ways *Salammbô* is more truly representative of the patterns of Flaubert's imagination than *Madame Bovary*. And not merely because it is filled with personal reminiscences of the crucial journey to North Africa and the Near East in 1850, nor because it reflects Flaubert's lifelong taste for history and erudition (the original idea of the novel was probably inspired by a text of Michelet), but because the novel reenacts a personal drama—the drama of a man haunted by a desire for the absolute, and capable only of finding the human substitutes of destruction and death. Sartre is probably right: Flaubert lived out fully and without issue the conflict between the synthetic myth of religion (in which he wanted to, but could not, believe) and the materialistic "bourgeois" spirit of analysis.[9] Sartre, in typical fashion, probably attributes too great an influence to Flaubert's father, the Voltairean physician, in crushing the innate temperamental idealism of his son. But unquestionably, a work such as *Salammbô* reveals an explosive mixture of a godless religion and a naïve *scientisme* which makes of Flaubert himself a kind of "priest" in search of a cult. His solitude, his lugubrious pessimism coupled with his dreams of perfection, go a long way toward explaining his faith in the redeeming virtues of Art. "Art is the search of the useless," Flaubert jotted down at the time he undertook his documentary voyage to the site of Carthage. "It is in the field of speculation what heroism is in ethics."[10] It is characteristic that the notion of Art should be so intimately bound up, in Flaubert's mind, with the idea of a glorious and tragic futility.

[9] *Critique de la raison dialectique,* p. 92.
[10] *Notes de voyage,* II, p. 358.

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JOHN HAINES

On Banner Dome

Ten miles from home,
I climbed through the clear
spring sun, and found,
in its island of melting snow,
the rocky meadow of Easter.

Among spilled boulders,
four huts tied in the shape of a cross
tugged at their moorings.

The loosened hand of a door
clapped across the wilderness.
The wind lifted a carton
that raced away like a flailing angel.

In the creaking silence
I heard the effort of a murdered man,
the one left behind,
whose stretched lips torture
the music of resurrection.

The sunlight is never warm
in such a place; to sleep there
is to dream that the ropes
that hold you to earth are letting go,
and around the straining tent
of your life there prowls and sniffs
a fallen black star who
overturns stones and devours the dead.

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Stones

They are dreaming existence.
One is a man, and one
is a woman. Beside them an animal,

someone who followed them
into the distance
until their feet grew heavy
and sank in the soil.

And the life within them became
an expanding shadow,
a blue gravel on which they fed
as they changed;

standing there so solid and dark,
as if they were waiting
for God to imagine their names.

The Poem Without Meaning

We have been building it
for thousands of years,
this emptiness where grief
is blowing, a gust
from a frozen fountain.

Where a man, primitive,
with a cluster of stars
at his shoulder,
moves intently into a deepening
twilight of the Ego—

the poem becoming Night.

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A Dream of Disasters

I was climbing a steep bank
when a plane crashed far off.
Someone I loved
but had never met was dying.

Telephones rang in my head.
Voices announced the sad end
of a search in the high mountains.
I had not quite reached
the door of my house when a man
ran up the road, shouting.

. . . . . .

It is often like this;
I have barely laid my head
on the pillow when
something rushes away—

at the end of a long, dark
tunnel, framed by intense light,
two strangers speaking of things
that have not yet happened.

Woman

No one knows that country
who has not camped
at the foot of night's glacier.

Only he who has kindled his fire
in a wilderness of frozen men;

he alone has climbed the
sleeping breath of her mountain,
and at the summit
rested between the moon
and the morning star.

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ADRIENNE RICH

Spring Thunder

1. Thunder is all it is, and yet
my street becomes a crack in the western hemisphere,
my house a fragile nest of grasses.

The radiotelescope flings its nets
at random; a child is crying,
not from hunger, not from pain,
more likely impotence. The generals are sweltering

in the room with a thousand eyes.
Red-hot lights flash off and on
inside air-conditioned skulls.

Underfoot, a landmass
puffed-up with bad faith and fatigue
goes lumbering onward,

old raft in the swollen waters,
unreformed Huck and Jim
watching the tangled yellow shores
rush by.

2. Whatever you are that weeps
over the blistered riverbeds
and the cracked skin of cities,
you are not on our side,

eye never seeking our eyes,
shedding its griefs like stars
across our hectic indifference,
whispered monologue

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subverting space with its tears,
mourning the mournable,
nailing the pale-grey woolly flower
back to its ledge.

3. The power of the dinosaur
is ours, to die
inflicting death
trampling the nested grasses:

power of dead grass
to catch fire
power of ash
to whirl off the burnt heap

in the wind's own time.

4. A soldier is here, an ancient figure,
generalized as a basalt mask.

As the girl in her crib of labor
breathes like a rabbit, an Eskimo,

so he regresses
to an older and simpler thing.

No criminal, no hero: merely a shadow
cast by the conflagration

that here burns down or there leaps higher
but always in the shape of fire,

always the method of fire, casting
automatically, these shadows.

5. Over him, over you, a great roof is rising,
a great wall: no temporary shelter.
Did you tell yourself these beams would melt,

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these fiery blocs dissolve?
Did you choose to build this thing?
Have you stepped back to see what it is?

It is immense: it has porches, catacombs.
It is provisioned like the Pyramids, for all time.
Its buttresses beat back the air with iron tendons.

It is the first flying cathedral,
eating its parishes by the light of the moon.
It is the refinery of pure abstraction,

a total logic, rising
obscurely between one man
and the old, broken clouds.

The Knot

In the heart of the queen anne's lace, a knot of blood.
For thirty years I never saw it.

Thirty years of metallic vision,
spears glancing off a bright eyeball,

suns off a Swiss lake.
A foaming meadow, the Milky Way,

and all those years the tiny dark-red spider
sitting in the whiteness of the bridal web,

waiting to plunge his crimson knifepoint
into the white apparencies.

Little wonder the eye, healing, sees
for a long time through a mist of blood.

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KATHLEEN FRASER

A Year Later

(Portrait of Nguyen duy Than)

I

Until the wrists end and the hands begin
his skin fits the bones that shape it
as an animal's will, who must move again
and again for fresh meat.

His hands contain themselves
like a separate life, lined
in the way of tree limbs (leaves
undone) stripped of all function

but direction. We eat together
Imperial Egg Rolls stuffed with shrimp
and afterwards tea. He talks. "My mother
visits California twice a year, camped

in Mrs. Roosevelt's living room
and is best friends with Pearl Buck
but we are strangers. This diplomacy grooms
her beyond me. I am a wild duck

whose flapping wings remind her of the rice
fields behind our house in South Vietnam.
The tenant who scatters seed there twice
a week thinks of freedom as rice in his palm."

II

France-Soir is proud
to bear the scandal of Paris
and pays
its Vietnamese economist
to analyze the fruits
of Paradise. Meanwhile
his francs do not snuggle up
but make tracks

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through the fingers.
An investment, it would be called:
after one year, to begin living
with his wife
and their first child
in the same city in the same room.

III
"It is quite simple. I run into this Christ
and our ideas walk together.
So we become friends, as men do.
To move in poverty
with people without things. . .
I think of him this way
but see pictures of the New York cardinal
who eats for three men
and visits the poor in his cadillac.
Of course I wrote to him! 'Dear Brother-in-Christ'
(Why should I call him Sir?)
'The people do not understand you. They do not
understand. Sell your car and send rice.'
How else can I return
to the South of my country
where the fields are dry and empty-
handed, with three brothers in the North,
whom I love,
making rules against me?"

Because of the Silence

for R. K.

Hands on the screen door,
unable to open it. Six weeks
of silence, then pressure.
Feeling hollows in me now,
cold greys of Maymonth near
the end when it rains afternoons.
I am lonely for my life,

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And think there is hope
in naming you, as you stand
by the Hudson in winter,
large and wool-wrapped,
listening to the ice move,
listening
to your heart move.
How do you live with the weight
these times? Dive under
ice, submerge, bathe in,
become the rush of water?
My heaviness can't remember how
to float.

On Sunday, intending to mount
and ride for an hour, I
wandered, waiting for the horse
to return from running free
in the hill grass.
There was a cage of peacocks
behind the barn, a male and female
circling beyond the wire.
He had spread his erotic fan,
holding back nothing. Peacock
blue, the feathers shook
and connected, desiring to dazzle
her. Riveted, his sex stung,
eyes darting black from
blue—the stiffened neck,
a beautiful intention.
She was oblivious,
bothering the dirt with
her claws, pecking at corn.
I found them so and wanted
to yell "fool" at her.
Then the horses came
and I rode a brown one
straight into the forest,
hoping to touch my life.

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The Stretching Begins

I
The stretching begins with the road.
Pulled out from Barcelona like brown taffy,
it knots and twists
boiled stiff for forty miles.
At St. Andrea de la Barca your tongue moves

for a moment, saying Andrew the boat the wild sea,
and grows dry as the road burns
once more into fields without water. Later
when the bus stops, you taste the silence
of the path, the old man who walks there,
your rented house on the far hill with its new paint
blistering.

II
Looking for the absolute, you found yourself
and were terrified.
For three weeks you rose with the animals,
filling every stucco room with flowers then
rushed to the fields for more; over your ankles vines
grew, your eyes almost blind with pollen.
But one afternoon the earth stood around you
like an empty quarry. And you said to your self,
I can hide no longer.
I am the stretching of a field with no fences.
You cannot leap over me. You cannot leave me behind.

III
I come for new skin.
These taking hands, see? No nerve endings;
warts callouses debris in the lifeline.
Sun crack me!

Listen. Part of me
falls. My bones are bare
and wet. A new skin is breathing
and it hurts.

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HAYDEN CARRUTH

Snowstorm, Deep Winter

In summer the brook rises
on butternut mountain where the sun
sets
but now

its source is the arctic circle
where whirling cold
breaks in a gale of snow
into our tangent

nevertheless we are merry
enough indoors with elmwood
snuffling in the stove
like a bear

and the small son dancing
tanze tanze für papa
learning his rhythm in a
country kitchen

wheatsong in the oven tobacco
sweet in the pipe black coffee
and the cat and the woman's
flour-laughing arms

and day closing in its best hour
to darkness
like eyes
closing in contentment

yet mine
open a little and I
quake a little
and maybe it's the

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fidget of middle age
in the same house with youth
and childhood
or maybe it's

knowing my eyes will open
out of contentment and look
into the window
into the gray outdoors

into the snow crashing down the brook
and see
all the deaths
died today

in all
all
all
our wars.

Odyssey, Book Eleven

Coming to the clearing by the brook
through clouds of snowfall a winter man
coming pausing by a kind of bourne
at edge of woodlot a man with an axe

twig of the spruce twig of the spruce that
druidical tree and each in a tiny cross
catching the softish snow druidical
framing the glade in lace
a valentine
the heart not red but black

black and deep black and deep

where the cordate hole in the brook
glisteneth

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black water underneath
sighing flowing
the black cold
going and going in the white snow

whiteness purity beauty all around
and that

that

under the ground.

TOM KIRBY-SMITH

Strasbourg

The stone blushes, and the angels glance
Sidelong, with quick animal cunning,
To where Johannes Gutenberg
Moulders in the damp air and clutches
His brazen bible. Overhead
Rainclouds part and the late light broadens.

You feel how the pressure of circumstance,
The buttress of thick-set walls, enforces
A sense of lineage. The contours range,
Exact and heavy in bronze and stone,
A confident handiwork that can mould
Man's image with God's attribute.

Continual concepts brace the body,
Assured motion in a massy frame,
An excellence of form that gathers
Here, where the angels meet the light,
Beyond the recesses of vaulted space,
The silences wrought from pitch to pitch.

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JOSEPH WHITEHILL

The Round Brass Elevator

FIVE RED-EYED PIGEONS, BEGGARS AND LOITERERS, waddled away when the thin girl came down the path to the bench in the eucalyptus park. Alert as she came, she saw the young fellow there lick his lips before he raised his head from his textbook. He was, therefore, the one. He smiled and got up. "You're Sally?"

She inspected him while they shook hands and made their presentations. His chin was strong, and his white teeth went well against his Pacific tan, and there was something strange about his soft brown eyes, something both feminine and penetrating. In an instant she saw the strangeness; his eyes were very large, and the lashes, both upper and lower, were dense as mink fur. Sally was unexpectedly pleased. "I'm Sally-right-on-time," she said. "And I guess you're Paul." As they shook hands, she noted that he contined to mark his place in the thick maroon textbook with an inserted forefinger, as though he regarded her presence there as merely momentary. Even when they sat on the bench, half-turned toward each other, he kept his place in the book, holding it on one knee.

With little stumbling or awkwardness, they agreed it had been a fine day for February, not too warm even though there was no breeze off the Bay, but it was a pity the haze hung that way on the water, making it hard to see across. Only now did Sally touch his book with her small blunt fingertip. "You need a book mark or something?"

Paul started and said, "Oh," then opened the book and memorized his page number and closed it again. "I wasn't thinking. That's part of the collegiate habit, I guess." He put the book between them on the bench. "Look, are you hungry yet? I mean, it's only five, but we could eat any time if you were hungry." He blinked slowly, watching her.

He knows about those eyelashes of his, she thought. She laughed and held her little red plastic purse in her lap with both hands. Her fingernails were short because she bit them from time to

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time. She was thin and very fair, and her light brown hair was strapped back tightly in a ponytail. When she laughed her voice was high and clear, and she showed pink gums and small irregular teeth. "It isn't so nice to tell a fellow that's just asked you out to dinner, but the truth is, I'm hardly ever hungry. Isn't that awful? It's the trouble with working in a bakery. It's so easy in the store to just *piece,* you know? I don't suppose I eat a real meal once a week. I eat a little at a time, like. A Danish for breakfast. Cheesecake, a piece of pie around lunchtime. Coffee going all the time in back. A doughnut here, a crescent there. You know."

Paul got out his cigarettes and shook up several and held the pack out to her.

Sally put his hand back. "You light me one," she said. "That's the friendly way."

Paul smiled. "All right." He put two cigarettes in his mouth and lighted both at once, watching her steadily over the flaming gold lighter. He handed one to her, then asked, "Don't you ever eat any vegetables?"

She laughed again easily, for little reason but her habit of punctuation. "You sound like my sister, she runs the store. She's on me all the time about a balanced diet." Sally leaned forward just a little and, looking into the middle distance, drew carefully on the cigarette. Then she let the smoke out of her mouth and sucked it up her nose. She was eighteen years old. "But my diet suits me, so Sally eats what Sally wants." She watched Paul, thinking, he's *all right.* Not old or fat or stupid or dirty or any other lousy kind of a blind date. She said, "Now let's talk about you." She smiled and drew rapidly on her cigarette several times as if it were going out. She fanned the smoke away and continued, "You said on the phone you knew Charlie Weintraub last year. Old Charlie. . . . *Good* old Charlie. He's back East somewhere now."

"He's in New York, working on a newspaper. He made Phi Beta Kappa while he was here."

"What's that?"

"What? Oh, he didn't tell you. Very modest. That's the honor society for bright guys. He's very bright."

"Well, 'deed he is, I know that. Good old Charlie Weintraub. Funny, he was a senior up here in the college while I was being a

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senior down in the high school. He had a car. An old station wagon."

"I know. A Buick."

"With a mattress in the back. We used to go to the beach over at Las Piedras and build a fire."

Paul laughed reminiscently. "I was just going to say the same thing. I went over there with him a few times. They don't let you build fires any more. They've got a cop in a jeep with those fat sand tires on it. He's got a spotlight with about a million candlepower. He's a real sadist." Paul stopped suddenly.

Sally said, "He didn't ever mention you to me. . . . Well, we even went up in the mountains once. Where the snow was."

"I never went up in the mountains," Paul said.

"That was a time, all right. Charlie's radiator all froze up and we had to spend the night in one of those ski shanties. If you don't think my sister about had a conniption when we got back in Sunday. . . . Hum, so you went to the beach with him, too. With who else? With anybody else? With girls, I mean?"

"What? Girls?" Paul gave a light laugh but did not look at her. "No. No girls. Just some boys, stag. The Beer, Banjo, and Body-surfing Society. Just to get away from girls once in a while."

Thoughtfully, Sally said, "No, he didn't tell me about you."

"I really didn't know him all that well. We were sort of casual friends."

Sally changed the subject. "Do you have a car?"

"Sure. I bought Charlie Weintraub's old Buick."

Well, she thought, so that's how it goes. I have now got the picture.

They fell silent, looking straight before them past the scaly, tendoned trees of the eucalyptus grove, over the brow of the hill at the Bay below. A thin yellowish haze hung close to the water. The prison island was just discernible as a tumbled, rude mass surmounted by a blocky, straight-sided mass. The great bridge was somewhere beyond. There was no wind, and the air felt stale to Sally, as if, somehow, it had already been used. The pungent, almost medicinal smell of the trees hung in her throat. She thought, the little question is, what did old Charlie tell this Paul here? Ah, most likely just what old Andrew told old Charlie

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last year. You've got to watch these boys and their mouths. Boys are okay all except for their mouths. Sally smiled out over the dim water of the Bay and said, "So you heard from old Charlie Weintraub. Is he okay? How's he doing? Was it a letter you had from him? Fine. Now, really, ah, Paul. What'd he say about me? Come on."

Paul gave her a long, amused look. Her lips parted a little at the deep beauty of his eyes. "It was a letter," he said. "The other day. He just said I ought to look you up because . . . because he said you're a natural spirit, a sprite, really. I don't want to embarrass you. He said you weren't like all the other girls, all colleged up. He said you were among the few real people."

"Aw."

"Scout's honor. Now, how about we get off old Charlie Weintraub, okay? He's in New York and we're here." Paul stood up to stretch and look around. His madras jacket lay folded on the redwood bench beside his textbook. He wore the common unofficial college uniform of the time: neatly pressed, artifically faded khaki pants with a little cloth belt in the back, and a white dress shirt and a thin black tie. He stretched now by lacing his fingers and winding his wrists with his arms down straight before him, forcing until his knuckles cracked aloud. "Ah." He smiled down at her serenely and turned about to survey the park. "See there, the tower? You can just see the top through the trees over there. You ever been up it?"

"Sure. Lots. You can really see everything from up there." Idly, she picked up his textbook. "*Problems of Overland Transport*, by McGraw Hill." She opened it and bent her head over it. "Jinks but the print's small. What's it about?"

"One of my courses. Transportation. The man who teaches the course wrote the book, so we have to use it."

"This guy Hill?"

"No, that's the publisher. The teacher is Carson. He gets a royalty on the book."

She laid the text aside, finished with it. She sat up straight and smiled willingly. "Did you want to go up in the tower now?"

"Why don't we? We might as well, don't you think? We've got plenty of time to do that and eat too before any of the movies start."

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Sally rose from the bench and smoothed her dress, aware that he was watching her brightly, wearing a fixed smile. She tossed her ponytail and bent gracefully to pick up her purse, saying, "Gee, it's a relief to get out of that white uniform. My sis makes us all wear white, even her husband. She runs *him* all right. But a uniform gets pretty dull day after day. You've been in our shop. I remember seeing you a couple times now. But you don't remember me, because of the uniform. See, that's okay with my sis. I'm just a little cuter'n she is, so she's funny about some things. Boy, has *she* put on the pounds this past year!" They started up the path together with the pale red sun at their backs, watching their own long shadows lunge ahead on the brown sickle-shaped fallen leaves and stringy bark shreds. Sally jumped half a step ahead and turned to look closely up at him, showing her pink gums and small teeth in a grin. "Sis did have a fit when I told her I was moving out into an efficiency of my own. She said I wasn't old enough, and all that jazz, but in reality it was simply because she doesn't like to see me free. Me or anybody else in sight. She was already married when she was my age, but I say you're a long time married, so what's the big hurry? I'm having my fun." Sally laughed and gave a little skip of good feeling. She had seen his lovely eyes flick at the mention of her own apartment. She thought, this boy is *all right*. "Where're you from, Paul?"

"Down near San Diego. My father has some laundries down around there."

"Will you go into the laundry business too?"

"I don't know. They make you wear white."

She looked sharply at him and saw he was teasing, so she hit him lightly on the arm. "You," she said, pouting. She scowled so fiercely that she felt her tight hair pull, then she immediately cleared her face; it was work to get her hair back that tight, and there was no point in loosening it with scowling.

The path they followed led around a dense bougainvillaea bush and came out, two steps up, on a large circular plaza of mosaic tiles, in the center of which rose the finger-shape of the great stone tower. A low tile wall circled the plaza, interrupted by openings at the cardinal paths that led away into the park. At each break in the wall were a pair of cast concrete urns planted with

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fleshy geraniums. Sally climbed onto the top of the wall to stand and look up at the tower. Paul followed her, saying, "This terrace is just about the third the size it ought to be. When you build a tower, you must have an open place where people can stand off and look at it. Look at Rome. Look at Alexandria. Look at Berlin. Paris. You can't even see this thing unless you're practically standing under it."

This tower had been erected by a graduate of the nearby college as a memorial to his father, and was paid for with money inherited from that father. The son had wanted to build it on the campus itself, but the trustees, honest and practical men, could see neither use nor art in it, and turned the money down. The mayor and city council, however, had been happy to coöperate. Their consensus was that the tower would justify its existence by its existence.

Paul said, "Did you know that there's stone in this thing from every state in the Union?"

Sally said, "Not Alaska or Hawaii, I believe." She had read the bronze tablet let into the side of the tower minutes ago when she had stopped to freshen her face.

"Well, you may not know," Paul continued somewhat stiffly, "that the tower was designed by a mathematician named Fueste. He ordered all the stone precut by means of an algebraic formula that determined the exact curve and taper and slope of every piece, even before the foundation was poured. They didn't really *build* this tower; they assembled it. There weren't enough stone chips left after the job was done to fill your hat. I thought you'd like to know, in case you didn't happen to already."

This boy is sensitive, a little, she thought. Well, we'll take good care of him, won't we, hon? "That's amazing," she said sincerely. He wants to teach, let him teach.

With other strollers, they walked entirely around the great base of the tower, craning up at the top, wondering and remarking at its sheer bulk, and thinking about each other. Back at their starting place they stopped beside the open doorway into the tower to read the bronze tablet bedded into the wall there. Two new priests, young and similar enough to be brothers, were there before them. The priests at once moved a little way aside to make room for everyone to read together.

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MARCH 11, 1928

THE OLSON MEMORIAL TOWER, ERECTED AS A MONUMENT TO THE MEMORY OF HARNISH L. OLSON BY HIS SON, HARNISH L. OLSON, JR., AND BY THE OLSON MEMORIAL FOUNDATION, IS 51 FEET IN DIAMETER AT THE BASE, 30 FEET IN DIAMETER AT THE CROWN, 325 FEET HIGH, AND COST $762,000.00. THE WALLS ARE FIVE FEET THICK AT THE BASE AND TWO AND ONE HALF FEET THICK AT THE CROWN. 7,300 TONS OF STONE, FROM EACH OF THE FORTY-EIGHT STATES, WERE USED IN ITS CONSTRUCTION.

"All that money," Sally whispered, holding her cigarette close to her face on the side away from the priests.

From outside, the tower looked quilted, or pied, since the stones were all colors possible—pink and tan and black and green—and no design was apparent in the adjoinment of colors. The blocks near the foot, much initialed, were nearly cubical, presenting outer surfaces more than five feet square. The mortar joints were so thin as to be almost invisible. Standard opinion in the town below was that the tower was a nice execution of a clumsy idea.

As Sally and Paul stood side by side before the bronze tablet, the backs of their hands touched as planned, and remained touching. They smiled at each other and Sally said, "This is fun." She wrinkled her nose at him.

A pair of black wrought-iron gates, curved like the tower wall and elaborately figured with iron ivy, were open and swung back against the sides of the doorway, latched to the wall with long twisted iron hooks. Just inside, on the edge of the interior gloom, was a souvenir case containing postcards and leaflets and miniatures. The case was glassed-over and heavily padlocked. The priests now entered with Sally and Paul; inside, waiting beside the souvenir case, was a couple with two quiet children.

Directly before the doorway, in the very center of the tower, rested the elevator. It was a huge and handsome brass cage, round,

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with a door that opened on hinges, like the door of a birdcage. Its roof was a black-painted dome, with eave-edges trimmed in bright brass. The sides were polished brass bars, stiffened by a decorative basket work of riveted brass strapping and woven bronze wire. Inside, passing vertically from the roof to the floor, three feet apart and parallel, were two brass pipes, guides for the stationary cables the elevator traveled on. There was a large iron eye-bolt in the center of the roof-dome, between the two stationary cables, into which was shackled the greased wire rope that hoisted the cage. The three cables disappeared into the darkness overhead.

A small toothless man in shirtsleeves who stood inside the elevator said, "We got a load now." Inside with him already were an elderly couple in tourist clothing who stood very close together, as if to take up as little space as possible. The family by the souvenir case filed on, then the two priests. Sally and Paul pushed their cigarettes into the sand pot and followed. The operator held out his hand to Paul. "That's ten cents each."

Paul put his hand in his pocket, saying, "What about them?" He indicated the other passengers.

The operator gave Paul a warm bare smile and said, "The other folks paid already, and these, of course, is clergy."

Paul took Sally by the arm with his free hand. He looked very angry. He said, blinking rapidly, "Wait a minute. There's never been any charge for this elevator before."

The operator, hand still extended, closed his eyes and said, "Expenses."

Paul pulled Sally from the elevator. "Hey!" she cried softly. "Ouch!"

Paul said, "We'll climb it this time by ourselves. Up the stairs."

Altogether politely, the operator said, "Okay," and swung the brass gate shut and latched it. When he turned the control handle the elevator gave a little elastic bounce, then slowly began to rise. The operator produced a flat pint can of liquid polish and a flannel rag stained with long dark marks of verdigris. He showed the can to Paul through the bars and said, "See? Expenses." As the floor of the elevator rose even with Sally's head, she heard the operator say to his passengers in a practiced, mannerly way, "Now just settle back, folks, if you please. The trip up takes twelve minutes."

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He began shaking the can of polish with an easy wrist-snapping motion. "The reason it takes so long is that there's no counter weights on this type of elevator, so the hoisting machinery up there is geared lower." Then, as Sally and Paul watched the cage climb into the dimness overhead, the operator's hand appeared with the flannel rag between the bars and began vigorous vertical polishing, one bar at a time.

Paul led Sally out into the pale sunshine on the terrace and held both her thin shoulders in his hands. There was no one else in sight, and Sally, mildly frightened, rubbed the place on her arm where he had grabbed her. "Now, listen," he said, "I don't want you to think I'm cheap. I am not cheap. I may be other things, but I am not cheap." He looked around to be sure they were alone, then took his wallet from his hip pocket. He showed her, besides the smaller bills, two fifties and a beautiful, complex hundred-dollar bill. "There, now. You can see what twenty cents means to me. You'll see. Just you wait till the good dinner you have tonight some place nice. It isn't the twenty cents. It's a matter of principle." His eyes were burning.

"Wow," Sally said, thinking of the money in the wallet. "Okay, okay. We'll walk up."

Paul grinned broadly. "There's a girl." He hugged her quickly with one arm about her shoulders, and he released her so suddenly that when she twisted to free herself she was already free. Annoyed, she fell away and stumbled, then turned the stumble into a light-hearted skip and went back to the tower.

They stood for a moment at the bottom of the spiral stair gathering themselves for the climb. Looking up the long bore of the tower, they saw the cage ascending, outlined by a ring of daylight from the top where the observatory walk was. Scattered up the walls were numbers of narrow vertical slots, or loopholes, that provided the only light to the stairway. Each was just a gap six inches wide in the normal lay of the stones.

The rusty steel treads of the stairway were cross-patterned with sharp little hobs to keep a climber's foot from slipping. There were no risers, just bent-down tread nosings. A solid-looking galvanized pipe handrail, worn to a mottled luster by many hands over the years, was terminated somewhat incongruously at its lower end by a large polished brass finial on the newel pipe. The

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finial was an urn shape, fluted and hung with ropes of laurel. Sally ran both her hands down it in interest, liking the delicate look of her hands against the heavy brass. "How beautful! But it ought to be all over jewels. Diamonds and emeralds, see, and big rubies around here." She made as if to cup the urn in her hands—Bathsheba bringing the wine to David—and it moved.

Paul said, "It used to unscrew."

"What?" She drew back her hands.

"Here. Let me see. Sure, it still does, see?" He turned the finial until half an inch of a threaded mounting stud showed beneath its base.

"Put it back," Sally said.

"Here, you want it?" Teasing, Paul unscrewed it a little farther. "You want to take it home?"

"Stop that!" she cried. "Just you put it back the way it was. I ain't kidding, now."

"I see you're not," he said, quickly screwing the finial back down on its seat. "I'm surprised nobody's stolen that before. I'll bet somebody does one of these days."

"Somebody'll be in a real jam, too, if they do. That thing's expensive.... What're you looking for?"

Paul was circling the interior of the tower like a dog on a new scent. Then he stopped and said, "Here, this is all right." He three-folded his madras jacket and laid it, with his textbook, behind the souvenir case. "Didn't want to have to carry that stuff up the climb. Would you remind me to get 'em when we come back down? I forget that kind of thing."

"Sure.... You want to race to the top?"

"I do not want to race to the top. I want to walk with you," he said, looking closely at her, as though his eyes were windows for her to see into his heart. He took her hand and squeezed it gently and said, "Nah, what I really want to do is hold your hand."

Sally laughed and leaned to pinch his earlobe. His grip was warm and good. She took her hand away and started up the stairs. The treads felt safe under foot, for the sharp points caught the soles of her loafers at every step and made her climbing sure. This was fun enough. He was a nice guy and his good family leaked out all over him. Sally was aware, though not explicitly, of the difference between the Pauls of this world, so secure that they can safely tease about stealing brass ornaments, and the

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Sallys, who somehow manage to get arrested for doing the same thing. Heigh-ho! The pity of this moment was that if she climbed the tower, she knew, all the freshness of her hot shower and clean underthings would be lost by the time she reached the top.

From below her, Paul said, "Hey, you see what you missed?"

She turned and descended two treads to look. Her eyes were by now adjusted enough to see the square lettering cut into the great black stone:

BASALT
NEW MEXICO
Take my sorrow and make of it a tree.
—René Voisin

"See, you get geology and geography and theology all at once here with your masonry. These nutty things go all the way up. . . . You are a really handsome girl," Paul said. He tilted his head against the wall and looked at her with his eyes snake-fixed, as though his longing made him weak.

"You make a girl blush," she said seriously, and turned to begin climbing again. She wore a blue cotton frock with a full skirt and many sewn-in pleats down the bodice. She knew it swung nicely across her calves as she climbed.

When they had ascended one full turn around the inside of the tower, they reached a little landing fitted with a bench to rest on. In the wall here was a much-defaced stone, striated with pink and tan, that said:

CRAB ORCHARD SANDSTONE
TENNESSEE
The departed has left us hope.
—Edmund Golyer

Paul laughed. "He has also left us his dough."

Sally said, "Listen, I don't think it's right for you to make fun of this stuff. Somebody took it seriously. I think you could be nicer and not laugh."

Paul said, "I'll never laugh again. Remind me."

"Oh, you."

When they had climbed halfway around again, Paul said, "There, the elevator's all the way to the top now, and you can see how far we have to go. Count the landings. Eight more. This is

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some place." His voice echoed a little. "Listen—" He called down over the rail, "Hoo! Hoo!" The echo was an almost visible elastic thing bouncing up and down the height of the tower.

For rhythm, Sally counted the steps as she climbed, going from one to ten silently, then starting over. When she reached one of the narrow loopholes she stopped counting and paused here to breathe. Looking out the slot, she saw they were just even with the ragged tops of the tallest eucalyptus trees. The view from this side was toward the campus of the college, all white stucco walls and red tile roofs, with arches and deep-set windows and sheltered balconies, in honorable Latin architecture. Beyond were the high green hills of winter. "I get turned around climbing," Sally said. "I thought this was the Bay side."

Paul put his hand softly on her waist. "The Bay side is where the landings are. Let's go."

He led the way this time. Sally followed as closely as she could, for she was beginning to fear the height a little. She stayed close to the wall, and watched the nickel buckle on the cloth belt at the back of his khakis. She also watched the bulge where his wallet was. She could have reached out and touched him. He wore black loafers and bright white socks. Sally thought he was really very trim and clean.

At the far side, on the landing, a tan, cheese-holed stone there was inscribed:

LIMESTONE
KENTUCKY
The leaves fall when it is time.
—Alan Mills

"Just you don't say anything, now," Sally warned him. Paul tipped her a grave salute, then blinked slowly. He sure knows about those eyes, Sally thought.

Five steps higher there was another loophole, one that gave west over the Bay. Sally stood before it resting on her elbows, which were within the narrow opening. Her forearms lay together on the stone sill. "Look," she said, "the mist is all below us here." The brown-yellow haze formed the ground of a sharp horizon, and the hills of the city across the water were clear in the coming sunset. "Looka. You can even see the tops of the bridge towers."

Paul put his arms around her little waist from behind, and

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leaned against her. She could neither move away from the wall nor free her arms from the tight opening. She stirred politely in welcome, then turned and grinned at him and kissed his jaw. "Not here," she said levelly.

He stepped back at once.

She turned to face him, and held herself where he had touched her, on the ribs below her breasts. Thinking of his good family and the wonderful big money-bills in his wallet, she took his hand and put it on her ribs again. "Feel that there?" she asked. "That way my bottom rib sticks out there?"

He cupped it with his hand. "I do."

"I had rickets when I was a kid. Rickets among other things."

"That's a shame." Paul pulled his hand away. Under his deep stare Sally felt she must have given everything away then, that Paul was looking straight into her soul. "I did not have rickets," he said. "I was very well nourished."

To escape the trap of her embarrassment, she cried, "But I sure can climb, boy! Here we go!" Ignoring the void beside her, she began to run, laughing and jumping up the stairs two at once, her ponytail jouncing. Paul ran too, staying close behind, not trying to touch or catch her. The echoes of their footfalls and her clear laughter tumbled up and down the tower in broken confusion. After two full times around the tower she cried, "Stop!" and backed gasping against the stone wall. Her eyes rolled up quivering under her fair eyelids, and sweat stood on her upper lip. Paul stayed one step down from her, copying her posture, and they panted for a time with their shoulders touching. Before them, hanging free in space, were the two guide cables for the elevator. Sally looked at them idly; they were a place to lodge her eye while she panted. Then she tilted her head and squinted. She watched a minute more, then nudged Paul with her elbow. "Look at that," she whispered. She pointed to the cables.

"What?"

"Watch how those wires move."

"They aren't moving."

"Yes they are," Sally said. "Toward each other, then away from each other. You watch."

After a silence, Paul said, "Okay, I see it now. That's very slow indeed."

Sally said, "It's making me sick."

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"Don't get sick," Paul said. "Just don't look at it."

She closed her eyes and nodded forward and shook her head. "Um," she said. When she opened her eyes she saw the rusty steel treads and the empty spaces between them where the risers ought to have been, and her stomach stirred. She put out a hand to the wall and groped with the other for the railing, then Paul's hard arms were around her and her face was in the warm clean cotton smell of his white shirt. She said, "Ah," and rested her head there and let him hold her up. "All that running!" She put her arms about his waist and hooked her thumbs in the little belt at the back of his pants. Waiting for her nausea to fade, she sensed his tension by its contrast with her own limpness. "Look up," she told him. "Can anybody up there see us?"

"No. Just take it easy." He held her a little tighter.

"That's just the point," she said, lifting her head off his chest to look at him. "You take it easy yourself. You're all in a knot." She rapped him lightly in the loins. "Old Charlie Weintraub used to say. 'Stay loose! Get the pores open and stay loose!' That old Charlie. I never will forget him. What a great guy. I hope you're as nice a guy as old Charlie. You do seem like a nice guy."

"I do my best," Paul said. He was scratching her gently between the shoulderblades.

"But you're sarcastic." She spoke into his shirt in total comfort.

After a pause, Paul said, "That comes from living, I expect. Man in the Modern World kind of thing."

"Crap. If you'll excuse the expression." She lifted her head. "Hey, what does this one say?" She was trying to read the inscription on the stone closest to them. Together they moved away and read:

MARBLE
ARKANSAS
Time's guide takes a crooked path,
but he knows the way.
—William Frank

Sally said, "Now that one really does get me. It's got swing, all right, but I don't know what it means. Do you, really?"

Paul's hands moved a little lower on her back. "I think these are all by mystics the family knew. That's what I remember from

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the booklet they sell downstairs. But no, I don't know what it means either. I don't think it matters. I think they had these stones, and they were pretty big, and 'Arkansas' and 'marble' didn't fill up much of the space, so they put the other matter on. That's my guess, but if you think I'm being irreverent or something, I'll be glad to change my mind. I mean, I want you to be comfortable."

"I am comfortable except when you are being sarcastic. I think sarcastic people are hateful, don't you?" She leaned back to look in his face, to see his eyes again.

"Oh, I think you're absolutely right," he said sincerely.

She laughed and hugged him, then kissed him delicately on the mouth. When she had learned what she wanted to know, she stopped the kiss and said, "Ah there now, you aren't sarcastic at all." When he made as if to kiss her again, she shook her head. "Let me go now, I feel fine. Please let me go now." She kept her head turned away from him, toward the wall. "Listen, Paul, this is the last time I'll ask you. Let me go. . . . Ah!" She arched back and burst fiercely from his restraint and stumbled and fell on the stairs. She stayed where she fell, rubbing one knee, smiling up at him. "There, now," she said. "You'll find out I don't kid around much." Her tone, though breathless, was entirely friendly and conversational. "When I say something, I mean it. Whether it's yes or no. Or if it's maybe, then I say exactly maybe. Remember, pal, I'm not one of your little college girls with seven different ways of not saying what they mean. I know your college girls, all right. I wait on 'em. They make me laugh." Sally was intent on the demonstration of her proof. "I wait on these girls when they come in, and this is God's truth, do you want to know what they talk to me about every time? Every time, this happens. They set up the conversation so it always comes around that I have the opening to say, 'Oh, no, dearie, what you just bought there isn't fattening.' Otherwise, I am invisible to them. So!" she said finally, "when I tell you not now, I mean not now. Period. You'll find that out." She grinned to erase his look of discomfort, to forgive him, and got to her feet.

Too late, Paul tried to help her up. "Did you hurt your knee? Are you hurt?"

Gracefully, she climbed a few steps backward away from him and breathed deeply. She touched her hair with one hand. "No,

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I'm not hurt. I am just fine." Paul climbed two steps toward her, watching her, and she responded by immediately climbing two more herself, still facing him. She wore a little smile in a clouded expression, deeply interested in his look of lustful concern. She put a steadying hand on his shoulder and talked to him quietly. "You know what old Charlie Weintraub taught me to say, you think I'm so sweet? Stay down there right where you are. Old Charlie taught me to say this, at just the right time: 'I am dirt for you and you are pig for me. I am your warm wet dirt and you are my long-nosed pig. Now you must root in me.' There. That shock you? That's what old Charlie taught me. But right now don't you touch me, Paul." Her pale blue eyes were wide, and her shoulders moved with her breathing. Suddenly she turned and fled up the stairs.

Paul ran after her as before, staying close behind. The tower rang with their footfalls. The whole steel staircase hummed and shook with the force of their climbing. When she was too winded to run anymore, Sally helped herself by hauling on the rail and kept climbing, two treads at a time. She watched the wall to avoid looking into the great depth beside her. She climbed past two more inscribed stones that she did not stop to read. She heard Paul's breathing behind her, and twice she saw his shadow on the stone beside her in the dimness. He said nothing.

At length she heard a murmur of voices from above, and knew the terrible climb was nearly done. She climbed past the bottom-pan of the round brass elevator hanging in its landing dock, then, blinking and smiling in the brightness, she made the last step and leaned panting against the parapet wall. The others who were already there looked at her with warm interest, as if they would like to congratulate so slight a girl who had made so long a climb.

In the center of the round roof where they stood was a large cupola for the elevator and its hoisting machinery. The operator stood in his doorway out of the slanting rays of the sun, looking serenely out at the world.

Paul said, "We ought not to stand still. Our legs'll knot up unless we keep moving. Come on, let's walk around."

Without comment, Sally took his arm and walked beside him, testing their ability to walk well together in promenade. She leaned on him a little, for she did not feel well. Seeing was diffi-

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cult; the magnificence of the view swam in her eyes. From time to time she had the sense of looking down a long tube with black walls; things in the side of her eye simply disappeared. "Just a minute," she said, and stopped to lean on the stone wall. "That was a long pull. I'm a little dizzy."

"Take it real easy, now. I'll bet there's not many girls who've done that."

There was a light wind coming off the Bay. The flat haze was breaking into patches, and they could see the glittering red track of the sun on the water. Sally turned her hot face slowly from side to side in the wind, her eyes shut against the sun. A line of tears sparkled in her pale lashes.

They were alone on this side of the terrazzo roof; the rest were around the cupola looking at the college and the town and the distant mountains. Sally sensed Paul behind her. She turned and opened her eyes to the white glare off the cupola, and Paul was approaching her with his arms out, imploring.

"No," she said, and skipped away. Trailing her hand along the parapet for guidance, she trotted around the cupola and went to stand beside the two similar young priests. Both looked at her, then at each other, then they leaned on their elbows again and continued to look in the distance, talking very seriously in soft French.

Paul stood at the parapet six feet from her and looked at her. She did not return the look directly; she half-smiled and looked at her fingernails. He signaled for her to come back to him, a simple gesture with one hand on the slanting capstone. She saw the movement but did not acknowledge it. She was tired, and it was pleasant to stand in the shelter of the priests listening to their intense and personal talk, and to feel the last heat of the sun on her back. Also, it was pleasant to run this thing her way as long as possible. It was little enough to ask.

Paul took a sideways step toward her. "Sally." Another step. "Say, Sally." He reached, and took her by the cloth of her sleeve. Sally shrank away, into the nearest priest, and struck down hard at Paul's hand. Everyone on the roof turned at the sound of her slap. Paul's wristwatch flew off, halfway to the cupola, and broke into three golden pieces when it stuck the terrazzo. Paul held his wrist against his stomach and said, "God damn!"

The priests said, "Ah, ah!" The one Sally had backed into

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supported her to keep from falling himself. His hands were thick-fingered and soft. Sally bit her knuckle and watched Paul pick up the parts of his watch. She was scared, and sorry to have caused the general embarrassment. Paul's face was red when he straightened. The priests, who were very little older than Paul himself, watched him in deep disapproval. "Thanks," Paul said nastily to everyone who was watching him. He took the parts of his watch over to a flat place on the parapet and reassembled them. He was tight-lipped, and concentrated on the little task with strong control. He held the watch to his ear, then put it over his knuckles and rotated his wrist quickly several times and listened again. Then he put the watch in his pants pocket.

Sally left the priests and went to Paul, knowing everyone was watching her. I will be swell, she thought. I will be lovely and sweet and swell, but I will let the boy know. He'll get the idea pretty soon. . . . Gaily, for all to hear, she said, "I *told* you it wasn't shockproof!" She added softly, still smiling for everyone, "Listen, I'm awful sorry about that. Give it to me later. I'll get it fixed, okay?"

"There's no need," Paul replied, turning his back to her and looking out across the park.

"But I guess you understand about me now, though, hon. Really, I can't stand to be picked at or pulled on, you know. I get so mad I see red. Even downtown, when I see some stupid mother hauling her kid around by one arm, I get mad. Bunch of kids that grow up with one arm longer than the other. It's an awful shame. I'd like to slap those women silly so they know how it feels. Oh well, I should worry. Right? Nobody pushes little Sally around, right?" Suddenly she felt that Paul was not paying enough attention. He was looking past her now, toward the cupola. Sally made a side step to interpose herself, and continued, still grinning hard, "I think it's wonderful to have an understanding from the very beginning, now, isn't it? That's the way everybody should be, don't you think? Start square. Right?"

Paul looked down at her and smiled suddenly. He held out his hand to her, which Sally, mistaking, took immediately. He shook hers firmly and said, "So long, Sally, it's been very pleasant."

"*What!*"

Paul stepped around her and walked to the brass elevator. He was the last one on. He had been watching the others enter.

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Sally followed him halfway, then stopped and turned about and stiffened her arms down at her sides. She lifted her face to the pale sky, lips pressed together, and held her breath while she waited for some sound from the elevator. When none came in several seconds, she surrendered and hurried to the cupola. The cage door was still open. The operator was leaning against the hinge with his arms folded, watching her. His eyes twinkled, and he gummed from time to time.

Sally did not get on the elevator. Putting aside all shame, she said, "Now listen, this is silly. Get off here. I've got to talk to you."

Paul blinked slowly and put his hand in his pocket. He took out his change, picked out one dime, and gave it to the elevator operator.

Sally said, "Please?"

Paul and the operator looked at each other. Then the operator shrugged himself away from the door hinge and said, looking down, "Excuse me, miss." She stepped back in blind obedience. He leaned around the polished brass gate and unhooked it and, entering the elevator, led it closed behind him. He latched it shut, checked all his passengers, then turned the control handle. A relay clacked in a metal cabinet and, with a soft hum, the machinery began to let the elevator down. A brief scent of ozone lay behind.

Sally folded her arms tightly and looked away until the black-domed roof of the elevator went below the floor, then she carefully started down the spiral stairway. Four steps down she paused to read a stone that she somehow knew, without surprise, had simply not been there before:

GRANITE
MINNESOTA
There are very few things in this world
that cannot be improved with either
garlic or butter.
—Kent Curtis

Sally said softly, "Ah, what's happening?"

As the elevator descended into the dimness of the core of the tower, the glow of its electric light gave the occupants the gilded, holy look of stained-glass people. Sally stared at them as she went

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down the stairs. At first the elevator gained on her, but she soon learned how to go down the treads two at a time in a regular, accurate movement, with her hand always on the pipe rail, and so managed to catch up what she had lost. Because of the brightness in the cage and the dimness on the stair, she felt unnoticed and unseen. Everyone seemed to have forgotten her. She saw Paul light a cigarette, and called, "Hey! One for me too, how about?" He did not turn. As if to avoid annoying any of his fellow passengers, he blew a plume of smoke away through the bars. Sally ran around and around, repeating her steps exactly to avoid stumbling, staying always level with the brass cage. Soon a harmless, though nasty, disorientation enveloped her; since she remained even with the elevator but was continuously going around it, suddenly in her sight the elevator itself was turning, screwing its way down the bore of the tower. She stopped for several seconds, panting as she held to the sill of one of the narrow loopholes, and her confusion cleared. Outside in the park dusk lay in the feet of the trees, and the water in the fountain pools was black. She began running down again, a little behind the slow elevator. She saw the operator talking to all his passengers. He shimmered slightly in her eyes, and, to her astonishment, she saw that the elevator itself was shimmering too, for it had changed from brass to real gold. The light in the cage, too, was golden, warm and bright, and the people were ruddy and healthy-looking, smiling as they listened to the operator tell a story. The white-haired couple were holding hands. As Sally ran down past the front of the elevator, like a circling moth, she saw Paul scratch his ear while he listened, smiling. Then she saw the operator make a baby-grin and give a little hop and a bow that meant the end of the story, and everyone in the cage laughed, even the children. Sally heard none of this, and reasoned loosely that her own footfalls were overwhelming all other sounds. She was now beginning to tire seriously; she feared her knees might buckle without warning and pitch her down. She depended more and more on the pipe rail that guided her hand. By now her little white socks had run well down into her loafers, and hurt her. She wondered briefly how the hell she had got herself into this. Now she dared a look down over the rail and saw, much to her relief, that the great finial that marked the end of the stairs was just two more turns below. She

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was ready to slow somewhat. She called loudly across to the elevator, spacing her words to fit between the tread-jolts of her descent, "Listen, Paul, I'm tired out. Wait when you get down, okay? I'll be right there. Just wait, is all, because this is silly and we'll get it straightened out. Okay? Okay?" Then she added quietly to herself, "Okay." Paul had not looked at her. Now he blew a puff of smoke between the bars. In the dead air of the tower, the smoke moved out to let the roof of the elevator go past, then lazily surged back and hung there among the cables. Sally let the elevator go ahead while she stumped on down the stairs in general pain, watching the retreating roof and sliding her hand down the pipe rail. Her mistake was to watch only the elevator, descending below her, so her hand struck the great finial utterly unexpectedly. By quick reflex she grabbed it with both hands as she fell. She swung around it and dangled there for a moment, for, world gone, there was no next step. Making small sounds of effort in her throat, she swung one thin leg back onto the last step and bent herself up to safety. On her knees, she looked weeping up at the solid gold finial she held, and her lips parted at the crowded twinkling beauty of the great jewels that crusted it. So this is how, she thought. This is the way. Dropping her hands, she crawled up three steps and curled herself close against the stone, where the treads were broadest. She pulled her skirt tightly down over her knees. The steel of the tread was moist and cold under her, and the sharp little hobs were real and hurt. This far down in the tower it was now almost dark. *God, what's happened to the door?* Sally swallowed. Peering between the treads she could see far below her a ring of golden light moving slowly down the blank stone bore. After a moment she felt in her waist pocket for her handkerchief. Hunching against the stone, she wet it in her mouth and washed her eyelids. She raised her head when she heard the distant murmur of voices, but they were too far away to understand. Moving carefully to avoid vertigo, she helped herself up the stone wall until she was standing, leaning against it. She took a breath that hurt her ribs terribly, and in one step crossed the stair to the rail, catching it in both hands. Her little plastic purse swung from its strap on her wrist. She looked down over the rail and sighed, for the elevator was now no larger than half a dollar, glowing warmly at the edges. Sally said, "Old Charlie Weintraub wouldn't

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ever have let something like this go on." Clinging to the rail with both hands, Sally removed her loafers one at a time by scraping the heels against the nosing of the next tread above. Then she put her purse neatly beside her loafers and, in her socks, descended to the bottom tread. She stood there a moment in twisted dignity with one fair hand on the jeweled finial, while with the nail-bit thumb of the other she made crabbed, upward-hooking motions all about the pleated bodice of her dress. Since by now everything seemed so surely planned for her, she sensed that any protest would be useless and embarrassing, yet she did resent with real irritation this unnecessary insult, this hot band of pain that circled her chest now and shrank tighter every moment. *I'm going,* she thought. *You don't have to push. I hate being pushed.* Just as her thin ribs were about to crack, she drew on the courage of her anger and inhaled against this squeezing strap. Something burst softly and let her go. As everything failed but her pride, she smoothed her skirt and stepped off into the abyss.

Paul, who had been standing directly before her, hectoring her with whispered shouts to wake her as he watched her love the finial and go into herself, caught her as she toppled forward, caught her because he could not step back quickly enough to avoid her falling. "Oh, Jesus," he implored, holding her under the arms and looking wildly about at the others for help.

"Just let her down," said the elderly tourist. "No. Not that way. On her back." Then he added, to everyone, "I'm a pharmacist. Uh, from Sioux Falls, South Dakota."

Paul laid Sally in beauty on her back, close to the wall at the foot of the stairs. A little sweat sparkled on her lip and in the fine hair at her temples.

Then, without a word or a look at anyone, Paul straightened and trotted across to the doorway as if never to stop again, yet, once there, he came to a skipping one-legged halt and turned and walked back, loose-limbed and stooping, his feminine eyes starting with an embarrassment lifted to the level of horror.

The two priests conferred softly in French, with swift, sad gestures to each other, then one touched Paul's sleeve and asked, "Was she Catholic?"

Paul twitched and tilted his head as if against a wasp coming in on his quarter. "What? What? No. *Was?*"

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The priests looked at each other, then went together to stand by the doorway.

The young couple with the two quiet children had herded them around to the far side of the standing elevator, and busied themselves now with continuous movements of interposition to prevent the children from seeing.

The pharmacist stood beside Sally looking down at her, his lower lip out in sympathy. Hands in his pockets, he jingled his change loudly and went up and down on his toes. Then he kneeled and took her thin wrist in one hand while he fingered for her pulse with the other. His swimming blue eyes went from person to person as if gathering up the loathing in their faces; he looked last at Paul to let him see it all. He laid her arm back on the stone floor and thought a moment on his knees, sitting back on his heels, then he bent far down to lay his ear on her chest. His face reddened at once in this position. He pushed down with his head several times in a snuggling effort to get his ear closer to her heart, and with one big hand he casually tried to push her breast out of the way.

At this, Paul took a quick step forward, then another, just as quick, backward.

Now the pharmacist lifted himself from Sally, pulled down the square tails of his sport shirt, patted the pockets to be sure nothing had fallen out, then covered one of Sally's wide eyes with his hand. He drew it away quickly, watching the eye. He tried this twice, then took a breath and got to his feet. He said to his wife, "I don't know. I think she's gone." To Paul he added with a certain hostile exaggeration, "But I'm not sure. I mean, I'm not a doctor."

Paul's upper lip lifted and drew back from his teeth. He tried to lick it back in place. He stared at the elevator operator, who was dialing a telephone at the souvenir case, then at the two priests, who were now standing spread in the doorway so as to fill it. He was very pale.

"You ought to cover the poor thing," said the pharmacist's wife, speaking to everyone.

"What with, Ethel, what with?" her husband asked, jingling his change again.

Paul spun about clumsily and ran to the souvenir case and bent behind it.

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"Hey!" cried the toothless elevator operator across the telephone.

"Just this! Just this!" Paul shook his jacket in the man's face, than carried it to Sally's body. He knelt and slapped her cheek several times tentatively, not hard enough to hurt if she had been alive, and hissed at her, "What'd you have to go and do something *serious* for?" He covered her with his jacket, up to her neck, and got to his feet. At once, with a look of great pain at the others, he fell to his knees again, took up his jacket, and went through all the pockets. Blushing, he removed a notebook, a fine monogrammed handkerchief, a pair of black-framed reading glasses and, with two little clicks, his gold pen and pencil. When he had stowed all these in the pockets of his pants and shirt, he covered Sally again with the jacket, this time including her sweet, fair head.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

Cleopatra

No doubt we first interested each other because we were both transplanted New York Jews, restless with the energies that had once been expended in the blood-feuds and class-hatreds of the metropolis. Now, in the bland alien air of southern California, she enrolled in a class of mine at the college where I was already shrouded with rank and dignity. I read from the IBM cards at the first session, and a gleam of recognition like a secret handclasp passed between us: Leah; she had glossy abundant black hair, high cheekbones, large dark eyes, large nose; very handsome, a light-skinned Pocahontas; a tall girl with a figure not comfortably ancestral but trimmed and trained for Hollywood. That same day after class, in my office where she followed me and flopped with a beauty's privileged gracelessness into a chair, I was not surprised to learn that she had Hollywood ambitions, was already a veteran of the Las Vegas summer chorus line, modeled for local painters and photographers, maintained "contacts" in Hollywood which was only an hour's drive away, and meanwhile majored in dramatic arts. "I get straight A's," she volunteered, staring at me belligerently. Close up her face had a pale and hollow look, to which the fire-engine red of her big discontented mouth called excited attention.

Why was she doing me the honor? "Dwight had your novel class," she said. "Dwight thinks you're just wonderful. Dwight says I daren't graduate before hearing you on David Herbert Lawrence."

"Who is Dwight?"

"Dwight Cantrell is my husband." And so her puzzling surname—it couldn't be some mutation from a Jewish original? Cantor, perhaps?—I connected at last with the nearly effaced image of a very nice and literate young man in the Contemporary Fiction class of two semesters back, who asked useful questions, wrote exams that got A's, and had a hobby—flying, that was it. He came to my office often to talk to me about it, it was the only thing he

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seemed really enthusiastic about. "You can get killed," I suggested. He was a lean crewcut Westerner in hipless denims as stylish as a new motorcycle. "Statistics prove," he said, "that ninety-nine per cent of all plane accidents are due to pilot failure." "And ninety-nine per cent of all plane accidents result in death." "If you stay off the booze," he persisted with his boyish grin, "it's much safer in a plane than in a car." He actually asked me to let him teach me to fly: there was a private flying club, to which he belonged, at the local airport. I was reminded of my childhood vacations in Atlantic City, where one of my daredevil dreams had been to take the half-hour ride in the rackety "hydroplane" that skimmed up from the inner harbor and roared and rattled above the beaches. Flying had seemed the definitive heroism, but I never took the ride, and airliners many years later were as heroic as a Greyhound bus. When Dwight Cantrell talked about flying, he meant little planes, himself at the controls, cold sober, checking the instruments. A drama of statistics, an actuarial romance, starring the hero who would live forever; and I envied him his wooden confidence. Now, a year later, I was envying him this body that must have warmed and coiled with his on occasions numerous enough.

Her lips moved easily and broadly as she spoke, not a prissy thin line; rarely they opened wide in a welcoming smile over movie-star teeth. She stopped once, in the middle of a statement about her plans, to tap a painstakingly manicured long fingernail against her front teeth: "Braces and the most expensive dentists," she said, "or I'd look like the Wife of Bath."

"You're a product of modern science."

"I'm a product that's going to sell. You wait and see."

She was a bright student, not unlike her husband. She worked hard, read carefully, wrote careful papers, talked freely in class, came frequently to my office and in fact talked about her reading. She was diligent and—well, "bewildered" is a rather misleading word here, but her very downright mind was impatient with anything it could construe as subtlety. She had brusque notions about masculine cant, and was on the lookout for evidences of it in what she read and heard: much of Lawrence annoyed her for this reason. She thought *Women in Love* should have been titled *Men in Love* or even—I had mentioned Lawrence's volume of poems—

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Pansies; and when an unlucky young man in the class discoursed on "the phallic principle," she sniffed with loud disdain.

"Mrs. Cantrell," I said, "would like to say a few words."

"I'm just jealous," she snapped angrily at me, "that's all. It must feel great to stick up for a principle."

She invited my wife and me to her apartment for several parties, mostly students with two or three couples from the younger faculty. She and Ellen disliked each other on sight: she was dressed in Chinese silk lounging pajamas in a room full of lavish blotchy paintings, beaded curtains, dolls, wedding photos on the TV set; after the briefest grudging inquiries she took no interest in any of the women. Or in Dwight, who served drinks and passed cheese and salami.

"You and your classroom crushes," said Ellen. "It's too bad you don't have the nerve to give her a try."

"Maybe I will, let me think about it."

"You wouldn't last a round with her."

"You see," I said, "I've always told you, you hate me."

"She'd take you apart just for kicks," concluded Ellen vindictively; and then, in gray afterthought, added: "She's a good-looking girl."

"So are you," I said with accurate gallantry.

"But not like that. She looks as if she owns the world."

"She intends to."

That semester she played Cleopatra in the college's annual Shakespeare performance. "Come see me, I'm really very good," she said. And she was. Her appearance—costume, makeup, bearing—was perfect: majestic and sensual, her face with its bold prominences alive to the mellowing distances of the theater. Astonishingly, she sounded right too, her throaty voice ranged from tender to raging and passionate as she carried the other players through on the power of her ambition. It was a triumph. We saw her at the cast party afterward. She glowed like a queen; she must have felt that nothing could hold her back now, and indeed, at the moment, so it seemed to me.

Once I allowed Dwight to persuade Ellen and me to go on an overnight camping trip with them. Dwight was of course an outdoor man. At the campsite in hot barren hill country, he seemed to have put up the army-surplus tent during the time it took Leah to

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light her first cigarette. Ellen grew interested, and began to help with the supplies and cooking arrangements.

"Ellen and I will go foraging for wood," said jaunty Dwight, "and you tenderfeet can sit and talk."

"Look at them," sulked Leah as they walked off springily. "Pure-hearted Gentiles, on the best of terms with Mother Nature. Dwight has taught me to recognize a redwood, so big and *solemn,* but all the rest are trees to me, and I can't tell one bird from another. And I hate the outdoors, it gives me sunburn and freckles, and the mosquitoes eat me down to my toenail polish." She stretched and yawned. "Otherwise I'm glad to be here alone with you, because you talk so pretty."

I talked to her while she sat on the gravelly ground in the shadow of the tent, till the others came back laden with dead branches for the cooking fire. The next morning Ellen and I took a walk after breakfast.

"What were you doing while we were gone?" Ellen demanded.

"What were *you* doing with the grandson of Gary Cooper?"

"Probably the same thing you were doing—feeling old." Ellen laughed doubtfully. "You're a lazy man. You'll settle for a warm bed, you coward."

Leah and Dwight graduated in June. Dwight had been a physics major, and he started in immediately on a job with an aeronautical electronics firm in Los Angeles. He was on the road most of the time however, and Leah decided to stay in town for the summer to work with a repertory theater. She was very lonely and out of sorts, phoned me several times to complain about everything from men to the weather, finally asked me to drop by her apartment one afternoon. I did, and, not having told Ellen, felt like a dangerous philanderer.

"Talk to me," she said, squeezing my hand, sitting in her silk pajamas in that startling room, like a set designer's idea of a Singapore whorehouse. "I'm so low I could die."

I gave her my standard pitch for gloomy students: You're very young, all your life is before you, Joseph Conrad didn't speak a word of English till he was twenty-one and look what happened to him, spiced with faculty gossip and some roguish joshing about her manifest attributes which she oughtn't to undervalue.

She sighed contentedly, expanding her remarkable chest.

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"You're a dream, you're the bullshit artist of the world, you make a girl truly *tingle*. Sweetie, let's run away together."

"Don't say it."

"I mean it, sweetie," she said, but her eyes were alert and amused.

"You treat Dwight like a comfort station. He keeps you respectable. Nobody else would put up with you."

"He's a bore, a fucking bore and an unfucking bore."

"Do you talk dirty with *him?*"

"Poor Dwight? Oh my God, he gets a hard-on if I say damn. Girls who talk dirty rouse his instincts such as they are. Around him I talk like Jane Austen."

"Why do you run him down?"

"Why not?" she shouted. "Am I more than tits and ass to him? That all-American shnook, with his hobbies. I could invent him."

"Why the hell did you marry him?"

"When you're a girl some day, you'll understand. He nosed around for three years, so wistful, like a puppy with an erection, he begged and begged, and I didn't see anything better. I didn't even see anything different—till you came along, you fathead!"

By the time I left she didn't bother to stand up, gave a curt nod as I opened the door, and was filing her nails when I closed it behind me. I expected never to see her again; she was moving to Los Angeles at the end of the month.

At Christmas I received a hand-painted card from her, in the style of those abominable paintings; so it was she who had done them. Shortly afterward came a rambling letter, addressed to me at the campus. "Sweetie," it began, and she poured out her troubles. She was attending an acting school to keep up her "contacts," trying to seduce casting directors for a job in TV or the movies, had just missed a fantastic break that she must see me to tell me about. I must come to see her very soon; Dwight was traveling for the company every Wednesday through Saturday; I must come next Wednesday; she would stay at home next Wednesday to wait for me; she was up at eleven so I mustn't come before eleven. She remembered that I had always kept Wednesday free of classes and committees; I liked it free for my writing. My memory of her had dimmed almost to extinction, she was one of

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those people whose presence is like a blow and whose absence is cancellation. The sight of that round childish script in green ink stimulated nothing like lust or strong curiosity. Nevertheless I was curious, and the image of her silk pajamas nipped suddenly at the trailing edges of my imagination, which was always ready for a bit of irresponsible concupiscence. Occasionally I would spend a Wednesday at a university library at Los Angeles, and that was what I told Ellen I was going to do.

Leah's address was on one of the canyon roads in the Santa Monica Mountains. As I drove up the driveway, I saw her wave to me from the deck of the pool in front of the house, as if I were coming home for dinner like a reliable husband. She was wearing a bikini in the sunlight that glittered off the concrete and the water; she was still a knockout, with a midriff and navel that the Song of Solomon might have done justice to.

"My baby," she said cheerfully, as I shook her hand and ventured to kiss her on the cheek. "Would you like to take a dip?" In her letter she had said nothing about a pool.

"I didn't bring any trunks."

"Use Dwight's."

"I could have used Dwight's when I was fourteen. Haven't you noticed?"

She patted me on the stomach briskly. "I never look at a man, she said, "I just listen to him. It's a bad habit you confirmed me in."

It was hot, and I proposed that we go inside. The interior of the house—at least the living room—was an improvement on the apartment, airier and less cluttered, though some of the familiar paintings were on display.

"I'll change," she said, and disappeared down the hall. She came back in a wildly flowered dressing gown, and caught me examining a table stacked with recent copies of women's and movie magazines. "I can't read books anymore," she said. "When you're not there to tell me what they're all about, they depress me terribly. I tried Dostoevsky and Chekhov. But they're so *sad.*" Then abruptly: "Are you hungry? Would you like some lunch?"

"Sure," I said, fascinated again by that generous and invulnerable face.

She got very busy like an obedient, rather inept little house-

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wife, and managed to put together a huge tuna salad. Her appetite wasn't girlish, she took big mouthfuls, chattering away.

"How do you keep your figure?" I asked with exasperation.

"Oh?" She held up her fork for a moment. "I work out at the gym, I swim here. If I begin to grow a gut, I fast for a couple of days. I've got to protect the property." This time it was her own midsection that she patted.

She ate another mouthful. "Oh!" she cried. "My almost break! Let me tell you." It turned out that a casting director had sent her on a hurry call to the set of a prestige movie whose ingenue had been fired because of an unscheduled (and unsanctified) pregnancy. The producer had accepted her!—a chance in a million!—*but the aging male star showed up next day and said no* thanks because she was too many inches taller than he. Later *he* was replaced by a six-foot-four cowboy star, and the girl who got the rôle she missed had virtually the same measurements as Leah. "Except," said Leah dolefully, "that she's three inches smaller in the bust. They made a sample dress for me that first day, and she wore it in the movie—padded like a mattress."

"What do you do with all your time?"

"What do you think? I still do some modeling, bareass, and I spend hours fighting off the photographers with tooth and claw. It's not easy to be a woman. I follow the horses at Hollywood Park. One of the photographers bets for me. Have you ever kissed a jockey? No, you wouldn't. It's like kissing a little boy and all of a sudden discovering his tongue between your teeth. Quite a shock."

Visions of Gomorrah if not of Sodom tumbled like falling castles through my head. I knew she liked to unsettle me, and I never learned the trick of telling when she was lying. I decided the right way for me to feel was old and out of it.

"Stay for dinner," she said, looking at me with what I took to be mockery.

"No, I can't."

"Stay overnight, and I'll let you use my bathroom."

No, she must just be talking tough, she wanted me there and she wanted me away; more away than there, though; and I turned the talk back into channels shallow enough for me to splash in like the joker I used to be with her.

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At length she sighed as in the past, pleasantly. "You know I love you," she said. "You're the only man for me."

"If I ever marry, I'll keep you in mind."

"How are your kids?" I think it was the first time she had asked about my children. She had seen them once, at a picnic.

"They're fine."

"They're cute, they look like your wife. When I'm thirty-five I'll have a kid. Imagine having Dwight Cantrell's kid! Maybe I'll let one of the jockeys knock me up and have an itsy bitsy kid, like a kitten."

"Have you ever thought of letting Dwight off the hook?"

"What hook? He thinks he's in paradise. As it is, I scarcely know I'm married to him. You said it, you know: he keeps me respectable. Some day maybe I'll be important enough to get a divorce."

I left earlier than I had expected to. She looked dreary, and as I opened the door of the car she put her arms round my neck. She shoved her body against mine hard enough to reclose the door and, with as much pressure as she could manage, kissed me on the mouth. "Remember me," she said. She waved while I drove away, and that face danced above the highway all the way home and didn't begin to fade till I parked the car in the garage and went in to dinner.

It kept on fading into oblivion again, by the odd law she exemplified: when that configuration of capricious energies was out of sight, it was as if it had never been at all, as if unlike her luckless husband she was so far from being inventable that unless I saw her in her marvelous flesh I could not believe she existed. When a letter came two years later, postmarked with the name of a San Francisco suburb, I had forgotten her again, and the round script in green ink did not bring her back. It was another long complaint, but more mournful, wearier I thought. Dwight had been transferred to the San Francisco office; he still spent most of his time on the road. She had never quite latched on in Hollywood; now she was concentrating on the little theaters in San Francisco. Meanwhile to stay busy she had taken a job in the chorus line at a night club. I ought to come see her, at home and in the show, and she named the days when she was at home and Dwight wasn't.

I didn't write her, and I didn't go. Months passed, without

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another letter. One week during the summer, an article I was working on was going badly, and I wanted to get away. I sometimes visited a friend in Berkeley, and that was where I told Ellen I was going. It was in fact where I really intended to go. I made it a kind of game: I wouldn't write Leah, or phone her, or do anything but drop in at her address at a time she had said she would be there; if she was and would talk, I'd spend a few hours, and then I'd go on up to Berkeley for my visit; if she wasn't, I would never seek her out again.

I rang the doorbell to her apartment at eleven-fifteen in the morning, and there she was at the door: the same phenomenon, in a different flowery dressing gown.

"You bastard," she said. "I thought you were out of my life for good." She kissed me a wet lipsticky smack on the mouth, rubbed against me so that I could feel her nipples, and jabbed a gentle fist into my ribs.

"Quite a reception," I was able to say.

"I've saved it for you because I'm sure you've got six or seven more kids by this time and never any attention from the lady of the house."

"There are no more kids, and the lady of the house is a whirlwind in bed."

"You're a liar, but I'm accustomed to polite husbands."

Since I had started from home at six A.M. after toast and coffee, and had come up all the way at seventy without stopping, I let her make a skillet-sized omelet that served for her breakfast and my lunch.

"It's like old times," she said fondly, pouring my coffee.

"Old times were never like this."

"You've never seen me dance. Tonight you'll see me dance. You'll drive me in, watch the show from a ringside table, and take me home. You'll meet Arturo, the boss. He's a pimp and a slave-driver and won't take baths, and I can't find a kind word to say about him."

I had stumbled into a recoverable past, it felt like a honeymoon on the Nile, the purity and gold of vice that will redeem this ashy world. On the walls her awful paintings hung like pledges of her mortality: she will grow old and die. But till then she sat across from me with her elbows on the table, chewing away like a healthy horse, telling me all the gossip about the girls in the

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chorus, listening to me with heartbreaking delight while I acknowledged her as queen of the world, sovereign of heartbreak and delight, of inexhaustible bounties.

"You beautiful dumb Jew," she said, "why did you have to go and marry a *shiksa?*"

"You sound like everybody's Jewish mother."

"When I was old enough to look like a woman my father, who was very pious and prayed all day and was always wrapping and unwrapping those damned leather straps up and down his arm, told me that all the Jewish boys would lust after *shiksas* and all the girls after *shagitzes,* and little by little the Jews would be assimilated to the dusty promises of the false Messiah and vanish from the earth. But I said, Pop, maybe you're wrong, maybe it'll be the other way round and little by little the Jews will take over the world by the strength of their sinful desires. He laughed and pinched my cheek; he was a good man, even if he *was* religious."

"Leah, the kitchen philosopher."

"Professor X, the phallic principle without a foreskin."

"Leah, the dish that's never been had."

"I've been had, every way."

In my terror of the exaltation I was steeped in, I said: "By Arturo the boss?"

She stared at me with the old mean look that, though I was at last able to understand it as the general defense against men, chilled me like death. "Yes," she said, "by Arturo, who stinks. By the comic of the show, who tells dumb dirty jokes in his sleep. By every peepshow photographer with a couch in his studio. By faggots who wanted to reform. By girls, you mutt. Upside down and backwards. In triples and squares. Inside out and hanging from the chandelier. I'm a battlefield where nothing grows. Any other questions?"

"Yes," I said. "Will you let me spend the night?"

"I would have. I would have done even that for you because you're the only man in the world and I love you. But now I won't."

"Why not?"

"Because I'm no good at it. Don't smile, don't be bitter, you big baby. I'm a lousy lay, and that's one way I'm not going to disappoint you."

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"I don't care."

"Now you don't care, but later you would, you poet. Suffer." She was angry, finished, very cold and deliberate.

Sitting there opposite her I began to tremble, slightly and then worse and worse. She stared at me without alarm, she wanted to make sure I wasn't faking; I wasn't, and my teeth started clattering like bones. So she almost lifted me out of the chair, led me into the bedroom, slid naked out of her gown, lay down beside me on the bed, and gripped me tightly against her till I stopped trembling and began to have other notions again.

"Are you all right?" she said. "Say, that's a good trick."

"I feel like a millionaire."

"In just a minute you'll feel like five bucks and thank you ma'am. Go ahead then; just once, you dreamer, so you'll know you haven't missed a thing. No, take your clothes off and crawl in. Between the sheets, I mean. It's laundry day today, anyhow."

So I was safe in gorgeous territory, and she stroked my head affectionately while I took my time enjoying the scenery.

"Do you love me?" she asked, brushing the sweat off my upper lip with an enameled fingertip as she leaned on an elbow over me where I lay resting like a happy tourist.

"I love you."

"And will you forget me when you leave?"

I pondered that for a moment, debating whether to tell the truth which for the moment I myself could scarcely credit. "Yes," I said.

"That's good. Stay the afternoon, and take me to dinner and then to the club, and leave me there. Don't come in, and don't pick me up. Go away, and don't come back. I like to keep you in a separate part of my head. You're my only child, and I'll love you forever."

When I drove up to the club, she put my hand on her breast and kissed me.

"Remember me," she said.

"I'll try not to."

"All right, forget me." She laughed, she might have been the promise of everything, she looked as easy to forget as life.

"Write me," I said as she got out.

"Some time," she said over her shoulder, and was gone.

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VERNON YOUNG

The Verge and After: Film by 1966

> "Whoever is creative in a truly original sense . . . aims at being self-sufficient; whoever indulges in the bizarre seeks to impress his contemporaries or to amaze them."
> —Max Friedländer, *On Art and Connoisseurship*

THE PARTY'S OVER. . . . ANOTHER PHASE OF FILM HISTORY, in many ways the most creative, is drawing to a close, accompanied by a jump-cut bang and a pornographic whimper. Consistent with the cycles that prevail in the public arts, the masters of the last decade have been in turn extolled, exploited, excoriated and finally expropriated. What makes the spectacle doubly painful is to note how often the elect have themselves lost nerve and dignity, producing travesties of their own work in obedience to the querulous onslaught which infallibly followed the first wave of pseudo-intellectual adulation from the gaggle of geese that yearly troubles the air over Cannes, over Berlin, over Venice, over San Sebastiàn and over Karlovy-Vary.

If we look back to some of the outstanding films released between 1957 and 1964, no *revenant* with a lapsed Party-membership card, a volume of Paul Rotha at his beck and a picture of Garbo next to his mother's over the bed, can persuade us that there was only one Golden Age (in a mere fifty years of film-making) or that it had more to offer the mature mind and the exacting eye. Reconsider the following, *made in Europe alone,* and ask the jealous archivist how many movies of the Silent Era or of any period before the Fifties have exposed the human muddle more searchingly, with such a range of idiom: from Sweden, *The Magician, The Virgin Spring, Winter Light;* from Italy, *L'Avventura, La Notte, Labbra Rosse, Bandits of Orgosolo, Fellini 8½, Il Posto;* from France, *Le Beau Serge* ("The Friends"), *The 400 Blows, Le Trou* ("The Night Watch"), *Les Mauvais Coups, Un Coeur Gros Comme Ça, Jules et Jim, Sundays and Cybèle;* from Poland, *Real End of the War* and *Knife in the Water;* from Soviet Russia, *Lady With a Dog;* from Greece, *A Matter of Dignity,* from Spain, *Viridiana;* from Hungary, *The Lark.*

An arbitrary selection, of course, perhaps even 'highly personal': it comprises films which have never acquired the doubtful status of being *en vogue,* as well as many that stand precisely for what we mean when we talk of a new wave, a new refinement, a new liberation. What they have in common, regardless of genre and of whether the immediate subject is elemental or sophisticated, is a kind of authenticity which used to be labelled *adult* (still is, in areas where filmgoers haven't grown up to it—and never will) and resources of style for

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conveying the values of quite diverse experiences. Remarkably, the best films of Bergman, of Antonioni, of Chabrol and Truffaut (and of numerous Frenchmen not named here), of Cacoyannis and of Leopoldo Torre-Nilsson (not listed above), have cultivated a growing tendency since the late war to provide a starved minority with film subject matter distilled from civilised sources of reference. These films have been distinguished by a rare quality of exposition—sentient, especially, in the realm of the unspoken—heretofore restricted to literature, without containing a foot that would have been more effective *as* literature. Thematic music has been drastically reformed or banished, actors have had tyrannical demands made on them to *feel* so that they'll look as if they're capable of thought. The irony is sharp. At the hour when the New Agglutinate is feverishly diligent, blurring all distinctions of class, capacity, sex, color and nationality, and just when small remote countries are haggling or plotting to efface themselves in an international supermarket, film-makers have at last learned, with some consistency, to disclose the tell-tale nuances of creed and behaviour that make people interesting to one another at all.

For compound reasons, this newfoundland of subtle possibilities has already been placed out of bounds or vandalised. We can better understand how and why if we relate what is happening now to what was promised in the Fifties. As of today, Bergman and Antonioni are in purely defensive positions; Cacoyannis has done the unspeakable thing, proving (with *Zorba the Greek*) that he could stoop to the level of Jules Dassin; Polish filmmakers have thoroughly tapped their one potent subject, the war within the War, and are looking for an *avant-garde* to join outside their borders;[1] Buñuel, a flourishing but impaired veteran, having made the definitive version of his bitter fables (one would suppose) in *Viridiana,* carries on vindictively, with seasonal reversions to anti-clericalism, exposés of the ruling classes (no longer ruling) and the fate of would-be saints in our time, for all the world like a literature professor I once knew whose main diversion, at 50-odd, was to protest his rebellious virility by telling obscene stories to the nuns who attended his summer courses! The elite of the young Frenchmen have barely had a chance to establish themselves before being relegated by freezing funds and by the force-fed preference for Godardism. Chabrol has never recovered the classical definition of his first films. Resnais can scarcely ring further changes on an abstract mode which was, in any case, a revival of procedures thirty years old—and he's wisely not trying. Truffaut will survive, invincibly

[1] All countries of the Eastern Bloc are finding it hard to make film without looking to the West for examples or escape routes: either the high-cost epic or variants on the New Twitch. Roman Polanski's *Knife in the Water* (1962) was one of the most shrewdly observed films on the Triangle subject made outside France but *Repulsion* (1965), produced in England with lots of money, is a salacious exhibit offered as a serious study in psycho-pathology.

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—or I'll never drink sack again: a dozen of them will survive creatively if they rob banks or implore Malraux to save them from the salt-mines of the industrial documentary or the public shame of Anglo-American co-production. This leaves—among the master composers alluded to—Leopoldo Torre-Nilsson and Fellini. I haven't seen the last few films of Torre-Nilsson; on the basis of those I have seen I feel more confident of his future sanity than that of any director who came to prominence within the last fifteen years. So far as I've been able to verify, he hasn't been paralyzed by a monomaniac style, he has made no concessions to the liberals' good-housekeeping label, he hasn't begged us to look at his wounds, he hasn't wept or snarled because there is no God or because he's no longer breastfed, and he hasn't closed a film with an immobilised frame (I hope I'm correct, here). His settings—the Colonial palaces, law courts, cafés and spider-webbed attics of Buenos Aires—are indelible. Ruthless and picturesque, his films have been about responsibilities and they have usually taken place, morally, at the nexus of private dream and public importunity. So, in another way, have Fellini's. Unrivalled by anyone save Kurosawa for sheer velocity and virtuosity, Fellini remains, if nothing else, the supreme epic mannerist. For how long his centripetal subject matter and his disingenuous self-regard can be kept alive by his ravishing energy I would make no attempt to predict. This would appear largely to depend on how many members of his family he can transfigure before being consumed in a blaze of vulgarity. Since he has the ingratiating notion that we are *all* members of his family (a triumph of Italian solipsism rather than of Catholic Christendom), he may have many more Roman candles to ignite. (I write this before the arrival of Giulietta 9½, trembling at every advance report.)

Of the three directors who have notably made film by schooling its means—rather than by amplifying them—Bresson, Antonioni, Bergman—the last named has shown the greatest staying power. Bresson, to whose monkish art Antonioni paid close heed twenty years ago, is now too much in love with God to cherish the finer points of cinema. Bergman hates Him with sufficient ambivalence to honor Him with a rival perfection. Antonioni mopes. . . . In 1958 Bergman was receiving a degree of rapt attention never before accorded a film director of such high-minded originality. Always too convenient a vehicle for critics hunting an esoteric thesis—in the French spirit, they hope—Bergman has offered other film-makers nothing to recapitulate except his forbidding integrity. He has taken some silly detours, even recently (such as *Not To Speak of All Those Women*), he has made embarrassingly defiant gestures and taken his subjects into polar wastes where few care to follow, yet his later work, seen as a whole, is incredibly disciplined, purged of all but the irreducible elements of theme, character and setting, un-upholstered by auxiliary effects, optical or musical. Defiance hardens; it tends to encourage a man's most

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stubbornly held principles which, in an artist, may not be his purest. Film directors are terribly at the mercy of outside demands, which makes it inordinately difficult for them to be self-dedicated and diffident at the same time. Buñuel, Antonioni, Cacoyannis and Fellini have all fatally reacted to their audience (i.e. to the *hecklers*) instead of abiding by their own consciences. Bergman has reacted negatively; making no attempts to comply or reform, he has simply retreated, and this strategy has certainly contributed to the austerity of his work. The question remains: how many more films about three people in a box canyon of the mind can we be expected to anticipate with pleasure? . . . Where Bergman *has* been used, grossly, is in the area of his compulsive sexual candor which, in fact, assuming the need for being so visually explicit (I think this is the least important prerogative acquired by film producers), he has personally handled with extraordinary adroitness. Other Swedish film directors, however, share neither his justification nor his skill; yet, undeterred, after *The Virgin Spring* and again, following *The Silence,* they have more than abused his precedent, supplying us *ad nauseam* with panting simulations of orgasm, and explorations of every borderline activity they can hound the censor into releasing. As a Swedish problem this is less significant than formerly; almost everywhere in the West, as well as in Japan, sex is simply another of the great forces devaluated by mass culture.[2]

Ansiktet ("The Magician") occupies, in Bergman's chronology, a comparable position to that of *8½* in Fellini's, but when Bergman's film was premiered Fellini was initiating his most grandiose mutation with *La Dolce Vita.* Almost before the film was edited, those who were privy to what had been going on in Rome were rushing to film a wilder party than the terminal one of Fellini's Morality. I don't know who is considered to hold that pointless record. I'd contend that the only grand orgy on film with as integral a function within its provoking subject is the terrible climax of *Viridiana,* and it's quite unlikely that Buñuel needed Fellini's inspiration for that. Altogether, Fellini has been too protean for anyone else glibly to adapt. His zestful commitment to life (be it ever so humble, fatuous or corrupt, Fellini will find melody in it) is as inimitable as his sentimentality and his bent for allegory. Furthermore, the paraphrasable content of his later films does not lend itself to congenial reproduction. Fellini's treatment is everything, his message a modest ingredient. "8½," for instance, can only be partitioned by egomaniacs with far less charm than Mastroianni-Fellini and with none of the author's expressionist

[2] The pattern of Japanese film-making closely parallels that of the West—a hubbub of genuine experiment and calculated sensationalism, violent exhibits of suppressed panic and sexual belligerence and, at the still center, a few figures going their own temperate way. . . . The best of the *shomingeki* films, from the early Fifties (made by Naruse, Gosho and the late Ozu), rely on a form of understatement that suggests Antonioni but which, in sociological reference, is closer to the work of Ermanno Olmi.

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poetry. That film does lend itself to crude simplification, no doubt of it. Removed from the immediate dazzle of the kaleidoscope and one's ready acknowledgement of the sad disparity between effort and achievement, you may be tempted to ask yourself if a director involved in large-scale movie-making—especially, as depicted, one with such indiscriminate taste in women—is quite the ideal analogue for the Jasperian thesis that Man is his Situation!

Antonioni is the exemplary victim of unreserved admiration, excessive abuse and—it must be confessed—of his own single-track fixation. When he transposed the dying strains of *La Dolce Vita* into reverberations that seemed to arise from the heart of an unembodied but distinctly felt doom, the result was a dimension of film language which should have been inviolable. Nothing is sacred. A periphery of apes clad as apostles has been making Antonioni-films galore, i.e., shooting sequences in which one or two lonely-of-course, alienated-of-course, dreamy individuals take an interminable length of time to answer a question or cross a room or, by the fact of their being juxtaposed with a leafless tree, a bank façade or a sheet of water are intended to suggest profoundly existential cramps. Unhappily, Antonioni is now doing little more than that, himself, and the philistines who never understood what he was doing in the first place are bleating, "We told you so." Antonioni perfected a formalistic style which he was unable to rescue from mannerism, principally because he couldn't infuse it with creative variations of his single theme. He has an Italian gift (an eye for the scenic) but he is alarmingly devoid of an Italian resource: he is humorless. When a reporter asked him why he always used the same woman in his films, his reply was no less naive than the question: "I didn't think I had!" There's more than a touch of Savonarola in his makeup and Italian critics, for whom all issues are political, have played on that nerve, shaking his confidence that there is nothing more important to be than a poet. The strain evident in *The Eclipse* is a rupture in *Red Desert,* where he has restated, feebly, the design of *Cronaca di un Amore* (1950) and, in part, of *Le Amiche* (1955): the socially displaced woman and the indecisive man, vaguely associated with the world of work. But *Red Desert,* a beautiful but damned silly movie, could as well be entitled, *Red Herring,* since there is in it no adequate perspective, among the many tentatively advanced, from which to interpret what one is seeing. And this is not comparable to the cold anagrammatic ingenuity of *Marienbad;* it denotes the confusion in Antonioni's mind as to what he's doing, what he's saying—which film he is re-making! Is one supposed to take seriously Monica's view of her surround—if so, why, since she's a psycho-neurotic character? If not, whose? The lover has none (he hates all places) and the husband sees only the pragmatic content of things. The flirtation with "socialism" is a characteristic Italian gratuity these days (shake the hand which may yet feed you)

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—the rest is iridescent decor, and electronically contrived sound where there used to be ominous silence. . . . The wheel has come full circle. Antonioni's tacit subject, first announced in the short film he made about street-sweepers (*Nettezza Urbana,* 1948) is the nature of the space that man inhabits. In the episode of the Princess Soraya film directed by him there remains only space—loaded with another great emptiness, the unbelievably inexpressive features of that woman! We needn't be too shocked by Antonioni's participation in this fraudulent advertising feature; he has done commercial stints before (co-direction of *The Tempest* and *Sign of the Gladiator,* in 1958, both uncredited). It's known as singing for one's supper. All the same, it's a great pity, for no director has made a purer contribution to film art.

Purity is rarely transmissible and seldom for long attracts the young who rightly prefer spontaneity. Several young Frenchmen have managed both qualities and thereby confounded the eager in their train. The movement in France proved the most fertile source of an inventiveness which could be filched without obligation to employ it as artfully. Henceforth the credentials for fashionable film-making—besides a handful of ephebes acting out 'problems', preferably half-dressed—were the inclusion of leapfrog editing, accelerated sequences reminiscent of the Silents and—indispensable!—the frozen frame. The intellectual locutions of Alain Resnais were more difficult to negotiate at feature length. Lately a young Czech, Jan Nemec, has achieved a conscientious duplication of the Resnais elipsis and there's a conspiracy afoot to declare *Diamonds of the Night* (1964) the most important film since you were Hiroshima and I was Nevers. I admire Resnais' craftmanship; I happen not to appreciate his theory. To my sense the Czech film fails, for the reason that it's sponsored by that theory. Nemec takes his point of departure—and I do mean *departure* —from two adolescents fleeing a prison-camp train. Since you're presented at once with two seemingly tangible boys in a historical context, brutally familiar to all, you expect them to show some identity, development, *breath.* Within ten minutes you realize they are tokens only and that their flight will never be resolved, will be shuttle-cut, only, for an hour and longer, between a present indicative and what might be past, future or just hallucination. You are left with the cold comfort of watching a cinematic *process* and, as in *Hiroshima* and *Marienbad,* cheated of an emotional investment. At least the film was earnestly intended and anxiously edited with an eye to beauty and terror (as a 15-minute short it might have been commendable), which is more than can be said for the products of Jean-Luc Godard and his followers.

Godard has been a godsend to those who want to make film unimpeded by fine workmanship or preconceptions of the statement they're making. *Breathless* was a sardonic exercise that delighted the border-intellectual lowbrows who were the subjects of the film's passive at-

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tack: fringers, sufficiently in the know to sense their limited capacity for life, who retaliate by fleeing to a dead end of mental seediness and aimless convulsions of flippant protest. The film's calculated slap-dash, the staccato elisions of the cutting tempo, the tease allusions to Humphrey Bogart, William Faulkner, Dylan Thomas and the rest, the drawn-out nervous monotony of the bedroom scene, disproportionate to the total running time, were fitting correlates of the morally spastic world conceived in Truffaut's story outline. Thereafter Godard was on his own. If he has persisted, in at least ten films since, to utilize much the same treatment, *on principle,* we must conclude either that he believes the whole world—or those areas in which he has played the clown—is as amoral, impotent and disjunctive as the criminal-bohemian one for which he first devised the method, *or* that his negative technique has no creative connection with his point of view. That he has a point of view is debatable; unarguably he has no scale of values. A will to translate any subject into a protracted stutter, that's what he has, and an itch for culture that urges him to flatter the collegians and other coteries with a spasmodic slipstream of literary references. His technical recipe—formula would be too complex a term—is pervertedly simple and consequently sadistic. When in doubt, commit every solecism formerly eliminated by trial and error in film-making: fix the camera immovably while two characters talk interminably; flout anticipation by cutting within a scene or from a scene at the least judicious moment; disdain amenities of lighting and any thought of balancing textures or sound levels of diverse episodes; choose the least aesthetic of optional compositions, as well as the roughest of your "takes"—and drain every gag unmercifully. This patently destructive principle reveals the desperation of a barren yet egocentric moviemaker as surely as Action Painting, Pop Art and Happenings have reflected creative bankruptcy in those fields, together with the same reflexive contempt for an audience foolish enough to insist on a structure of meaning. The derisive content, such as it is, of Godard's films is as critically ineffectual as that of Buñuel's is getting to be.

Indeed, there's more than a hint, in *Les Carabiniers* and in *Bande à Parte,* of the anti-films made by Buñuel in the Thirties. The distinctions are of course considerable. Buñuel's attacks on cultural contradiction have usually been organized around an identifiable nucleus of images—pertaining to sex and death—whereas Godard has no organizing power and has discovered no lucid category of images, largely because the butt of his bad jokes is film, itself, Contrary to the received idea that he has enlarged the possibilities of cinema, the opposite view may be taken. Film is not his medium. There is no fluent scenic art in Godard's movies; they take place nowhere and are neither interestingly real nor satisfyingly abstract. All action is dissipated into fragments or arrested in static sessions of talk, uneasily situated be-

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tween the proffered context of the film and the equivocal process of film-making—a debased amalgam of Pirandello and Fellini. The revue sketch may be the proper place for his whimsies. . . . Certain bystanders have tried to account for Godard's anomalous role in French film by the fact that his origins are Swiss. He's a born offsider, that's for certain; the gauche redundancy of his humor and his antagonism towards form and the reality principle alike are quite un-French. Yet I'd be no readier to blame him on Switzerland than on Pierre Braunberger, who first backed him financially, on Truffaut and Chabrol who assisted with the script and production of *Breathless,* or on Jean Cocteau, who initiated the journalistic farrago by announcing that this film was the most important in ten years. The French, I believe, are too fickle to support Godard's loveless precocity much further. In the lagging countries his example, if widely followed, could only hasten another breakdown of the values by which cinema is best articulated. These are essentially musical values and every important film-maker, always, has sought to maintain them, each according to his personal rhythm.

For the time being, however, Godardism is all the rage, fanned by critics and endorsed by juries. Richard Lester, the Beatle-browed American who made *The Knack* by combining the most frantic ingredients of Mack Sennett and New Wave, is obviously a stepson of Godard at the mechanical level. Lester contends, in the teeth of his own film, that anyone intelligent can make a movie. Perhaps he was misquoted and had actually said, "anyone of limited intelligence." Giving him the benefit of the doubt, we'll continue to believe that any film worth seeing twice is made not with intelligence but with imagination. Anyone *can* make a film if he's content to follow his most irresponsible promptings and to play games in the cutting-room. I found *The Knack* adolescent in the worst way and idiotically mirthless. By comparison with Germi's *Divorce—Italian Style,* an expression of vitally comic disorder, Lester's film is merely an outbreak of juvenile delinquency. The influential gentry at Cannes last year were of Mr. Lester's party. By awarding his film the top prize they gave notice that *The Knack* was creative movie-making and that Rosi's bullfight film, Ichikawa's *Tokyo '64* and Sucksdorff's *My Home is Copacabaña* were not. Similarly in Berlin, two months later: there was never any serious question as to whether or not the Golden Bear should go to Godard's 'science-fiction' essay, *Alphaville.* Since Eddie Constantine, the star, was on hand to deliver Godard's personal message, "love can triumph over modern life"—with the help of Lemmy Caution—the jury was no doubt relieved at being able simultaneously to placate the plebes and reassure the keepers of the flame.

There was a film from Sweden shown in Berlin on this occasion, which I'd not otherwise give space to, that so perfectly sums up the wild intramural parasitism of the last few years it would seem to have

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been designed as an object lesson. The subject, so to speak, of *Love '65* (Bo Widerberg's third film) is lifted blatantly from Fellini's *8½* (jaded film director looking for a new dimension); the surface style from Antonioni; the dialogue from Godard (at least I know of no other as loaded with laborious mental effort, shop-talk and name-dropping); the sexual encounters from Bergman or Roger Vadim (you could fool me, there); the musical treatment from Cocteau-Bresson-Reichenbach-Pasolini; the final frame from Truffaut. Somewhere in this shrewd synthesis Ben Carruthers makes a bewildered appearance as Ben Carruthers, come to Sweden to act in a movie, evidently playing the part originally intended for Anita Ekberg—and why not, if everyone is to be interchangeable?—which gives Widerberg (i.e. the director *in* the film) a chance to affirm his social democracy by sparing a few kind words for *Shadows* and sending his regards to the producers thereof. I like to think of this film as 2½ but *Love '65* serves Widerberg's purpose well, I'm sure. He's building up to his magnum opus, four years hence, and don't you believe that propriety will restrain him from calling it *Love '69*. By that time he may be out of date; within a year we can expect to see coprophilia on film and to be called reactionary if we demur. Widerberg is prepared for any eventuality. In the film under sanitary inspection here, he includes, besides a conventional bare-bosom closeup or two, a conversation between two women squatting to urinate and an exchange in which the dimension-hungry director holds forth on the cinematic *raison d'etre* of Antonioni, while lying in post-coital embrace with his friend's wife—on the floor.

And wherefore could I not pronounce 'Amen'?

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B. H. HAGGIN

Music and Ballet Chronicle

THE METROPOLITAN'S NEW PRODUCTIONS of Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* and *Faust* were examples of what I consider the right and wrong way of producing opera. *The Queen of Spades* had realistic scenery of the type envisioned by the composer, which—designed by Robert O'Hearn with imagination and taste—provided a suitable context for the action staged efficiently by Henry Butler and for the superb music. A flaw in the production—especially disturbing to someone with last year's Concert Opera Association performance in Russian still fresh in his memory—was the Boris Goldovsky English; and the performance I attended suffered a further loss in effectiveness from the substitution in the role of Lisa of a new soprano, Felicia Weathers, with an inadequately small, cool voice for the writing whose lyricism and expressive force called for vocal amplitude and warmth. But the Gherman was Jon Vickers, whose tenor voice still had in its lower range the luster it used to have all the way to the top; the other principals—Regina Resnik as the Countess, Rosalind Elias as Pauline, John Reardon as Tomsky, William Walker as Yeletsky—were good; and Thomas Schippers paced and shaped the performance effectively.

The new *Faust*, on the other hand, was yet another product of the tendency exemplified in last year's *Lucia* and *Salome*—the tendency of director-designer teams not to employ their skills in the service of the explicit requirements of the opera, but instead to use the opera for the exercise of their skills in a striking piece of stagecraft, without regard for the requirements of the opera that it sacrifices. Those of *Faust* include recognizable realizations of the places where the action occurs —among them the room in Marguerite's house which, in Act 3 Scene 1, is her refuge from the taunts of her unseen neighbors, the interior of the church in the next scene, the prison cell of the final scene. And the requirements of these scenes were sacrificed by the new production of Jean-Louis Barrault and Jacques Dupont—by the permanent sloping platform that lent itself to the strikingly staged kermesse and other outdoor scenes, but not to the interior scenes of the third act; so that Marguerite didn't hide from her neighbors inside her house but wandered about in her garden while they taunted her through the shrubbery, and she was imprisoned, improbably, in a huge stage space open on all sides. And this act was damaged further by the restoration of the usually omitted Walpurgis Night scene, in order to include a ballet with, in Barrault's words, a plot "within the drama of the opera . . . a 'night of pleasure and orgy' at the Devil's," which, as

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actually devised by the choreographer Flemming Flindt, was inept and tasteless to a degree that made it painful to see.

The performance I attended benefited by the superbly vital singing and acting of the Bulgarian bass Nicolai Ghiaurov, from which one would never have suspected that he was, that night, making his first appearance at the Metropolitan as Mephistopheles in an unfamiliar production without a rehearsal. Jean Fenn's tall figure, assured manner and swinging walk added up to a Marguerite who was not an artless village girl but a woman of the world; and Barry Morell could never be mistaken for Faust. But the singing, and the alert conducting of Georges Prêtre, made it a good musical performance.

Another example of this type of production was the Metropolitan Opera National Company's version of Rossini's *La Cenerentola.* This touring company was created with the idea that it would give talented young American singers experience in performing opera, in the process of giving audiences throughout the country the experience of hearing and seeing it; and with the further idea that this permanent company would offer these audiences the well-rehearsed performances with ensemble perfection that the parent company—using international stars who came and went throughout the season—could not offer New York audiences. Both were excellent ideas; but I might point out that Felicia Weathers, the inadequate Lisa of the parent company's *The Queen of Spades,* was not an international star; and I must report that what the National Company's well-rehearsed performances have been presenting to audiences throughout the country is not Rossini's *La Cenerentola.* A musician quoted a remark of Hindemith to me recently: "Music has a face: leave it alone. If you don't like it, don't play it; but don't change it." The director Günther Rennert thinks differently. The face of *La Cenerentola*—which audiences saw unchanged and loved in the New York City Opera's production ten years ago—was one he didn't like; or let us say he thought the National Company's audiences wouldn't be delighted, as the audiences in the City Center were, by the bravura florid vocal writing sung with the right style to the right Italian words in a frame of amusing action contrived by a skillful director. And the face he didn't like, or thought the audiences wouldn't find attractive, he felt free to change. The change was a shift of emphasis from the music to the action, which was made into an elaborate stage entertainment called *Cinderella,* contrived to divert the audience in all possible ways and at whatever cost to the original opera. One of these ways was the device of a play within a play, and the visible operation of this device by a brisk young Alidoro who directed the lowering and raising of Beni Montresor's sets for the successive scenes, commented on what was happening, and now and then put on a costume to take part in a scene—Rennert's replacement for the old philosopher-counsellor who is the Alidoro of Rossini's opera. And additional ways were the chorus of male courtiers costumed and

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directed to resemble the chorus of an American minstrel show; the American-style humor in the English words; the anything-for-a-laugh details in the staging. All this added up to something resembling the musical show familiar to the audience, in which Rossini's music was merely what the words were sung to, and as such was sung, with the awkward English words, competently but without style. The production got the laughs it was contrived to get; but what the audience enjoyed was Rennert's *Cinderella,* not Rossini's *La Cenerentola.*

The New York City Opera's new production of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* reminded me that in New York it was this company, not the Metropolitan, that started the business of directors and designers changing the face of an opera with fancy ideas. The company was set up in 1944 not—as recent writing would have it—with any idea that it was to provide the New York public with exciting novelty in repertory and production, but merely to make it possible for this public to hear the operatic repertory at low prices. Its small financial resources were enough to secure the numerous young singers with good voices who were available for modest fees, but not to provide first-class scenery and direction; and the 1944 *Carmen,* with shabby old scenery and absurdly inept staging, but conducted effectively by Laszlo Halasz and sung well by a cast headed by Jennie Tourel, was typical of the performances which the public considered sufficient value for the low prices. But while the public was content with this modest operation, Halasz was not; and his attempt at something more impressive took two forms. One was the occasional new production with the deplorable face-changing innovations of its untalented designer and director: even before the Metropolitan's 1954 *Don Giovanni* with the permanent circular ramp destructive to every scene, there was the New York City Opera's 1947 *Don Giovanni* with its tasteless set and the innovations in staging that included Don Giovanni's being seen stealing into Donna Anna's bedroom during the last part of the overture; and this was the first of a series that has continued to this day. Certainly there have been successes—notably the 1953 *Cenerentola* designed by Rouben Ter-Arutunian and directed by Otto Erhardt, the 1959 *Così Fan Tutte* and 1963 *Midsummer Night's Dream* designed by Robert Fletcher and directed by William Ball. But most often we have got something like the recent *Carmen* and *La Traviata* with scenery by Gordon Micunis that was not only tasteless but badly planned for the action, and therefore responsible for awkwardnesses and absurdities in Roger Englander's staging of the one and Kirk Browning's of the other—though Browning presumably thought up by himself such details in *La Traviata* as the woman at the party sitting, glass in hand, with her feet up on the table, and the man removing one of her slippers. Or the *Don Giovanni* of Fletcher and Ball two years ago, with innovations that included Don Giovanni making love to a succession of peasant girls in the background as a distracting visual counterpoint to Zerlina

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and Masetto singing in the foreground; and, worst of all, the Commendatore's statute being rolled into Don Giovanni's dining room on its pedestal instead of stamping in on its feet as text and music indicate. In this tradition last fall's *Barber of Seville* had a hideous permanent construction designed by Lloyd Evans, which began as the exterior of Dr. Bartolo's house and later opened up to become an interior inadequate in size and in other respects for the needs of the action. And inadequate for those needs too was Riccardo Moresco's staging; but the production that dealt inadequately with essentials managed to offer unnecessary innovations—for example the front wall of the house becoming transparent, as the Count sang *"Se il nomine,"* allowing Rosina to be seen walking about inside.

In repertory too the adventurousness that exceptionally gave the New York public its first stage productions of Rossini's *La Cenerentola,* Berg's *Wozzeck,* Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* Copland's *The Tender Land,* more often wasted the company's resources on what, for one reason or another, was not worth hearing—Flotow's *Martha,* Nicolai's *The Merry Wives of Windsor,* Massenet's *Werther,* Strauss's *Die schweigsame Frau,* Walton's *Troilus and Cressida,* Egk's *The Inspector General* and a long series of American works: Still's *Troubled Island,* Tamkin's *The Dybbuk,* the successive Menotti products, Blitzstein's *Regina* and *The Cradle Will Rock,* Weill's *Lost in the Stars* and *Street Scene,* and in recent years the operas of Douglas Moore, Carlisle Floyd, Hugo Weisgall and others subsidized by Ford Foundation grants. The latest of these, this season, was Ned Rorem's *Miss Julie,* which in the columns of the *Herald Tribune* offered "a score . . . of genuine quality" with "arias of compelling lyricism" that simply didn't work with the libretto, but which in the City Center offered a futile and boring two-hour-long attempt by a man without talent to make like a composer.

The young singers with good voices seem to have become fewer; and together with the occasional well-sung and well-conducted opera like the 1959 *Così* the company has in recent years presented others as poor as the 1962 *Carmen* I heard, with only the good singing of Claramae Turner, and the completely undistinguished 1963 *La Traviata.* The *Barber of Seville* I heard last fall, perfunctorily conducted by Anton Coppola, had one impressive singing actor, Sherrill Milnes, who overacted and oversang the part of Figaro; Anne Elgar made of Rosina's music nothing but an effortful exercise in accurate agility; William Dupree used a colorless tenor voice with some sense for style in the Count's cantilena. *Miss Julie* was acted ineffectively but sung well by Margaret Willauer, Donald Gramm and Elaine Bonazzi—up to the point where Willauer's voice, at the premiere, all but disappeared.

These have been the realities of the New York City Opera's operation, as against the grandiose ideas of Julius Rudel about the "fantastic repertory . . . of 110 works," of which "fully one-half constitute perhaps

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the largest repertory of contemporary works available anywhere" (the many contemporary works dropped after only one season don't seem to constitute "available repertory" or anything to point to with pride), and about the personnel that "moves from Mozart to Weisgall" with unfailing authenticity in every "essential style" (hardly an accurate statement about the recent *Carmen, La Traviata* and *The Barber of Seville*). Or as against Alan Rich's echoings of those grandiose fantasies, rising to his apocalyptic conclusion that "the presence of the New York City Opera at Lincoln Center stands as a justifiable inevitability. In its present state the company is an integral artistic unit, impossible to compare, and without need of comparison, to any other operatic venture in the world. Its triumphs are dazzling, and it hasn't ever even made a mistake that wasn't interesting."

It is convenient for Mr. Rudel that he has an unrigorous mind which makes it possible for him, among other things, to defend himself against the criticism that the American operas he has produced have not been masterpieces ("Consider the very small number of operatic masterpieces that exist, and that opera-writing has been going on for three and a half centuries"), when the actual criticism is that they haven't had the minimum of quality and interest that justified their being presented in City Center to a paying audience. He argues that they had to be produced so that American composers might learn and we might reap the fruits of their learning—presumably masterpieces—years from now. One answer to this is that it wasn't the company's producing Still's *Troubled Island,* Tamkin's *The Dybbuk* and Menotti's various pieces of trash that taught Copland how to write *The Tender Land,* and that producing the worthless operas of Douglas Moore, Floyd, Beeson, Rorem, Weisgall and the rest is not what will enable someone to write a valuable opera years from now. And another answer was provided at one point in a newspaper interview in which the new director of the Royal Danish Ballet, Flemming Flindt, described what he intended to do. "I plan to have workshops in which our pupils can try out new ballet compositions. . . . We cannot experiment on the Old Stage [the Royal Theater in Copenhagen]. We cannot bore the public. Only prestige works are right for our Royal Theater. Tryouts belong on the workshop level, and from there we shall see where they go. Discarded. Or to the Old Stage." What Mr. Rudel may be charged with is failing to recognize the distinction made by Mr. Flindt, and producing in City Center operas on the workshop level.

The visiting Moscow Philharmonic, in Carnegie Hall, showed itself to be a highly disciplined and responsive group, with excellent strings and brass but less impressive woodwinds that included a tremulous solo oboe. It played with admirable precision and spirit, but not with the tonal splendor of the great American orchestras—this probably

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because of what Isaac Stern reported after a Russian tour: that the string-players in Russian orchestras don't own the first-class instruments that the players in the great American orchestras own. Naturally the orchestra performed a lot of Russian music, old and recent; but I chose to satisfy my interest in what sort of performances gave the Russian public its ideas of works like Mahler's Ninth and Debussy's *La Mer*. As against the relaxed, spacious and massive Mahler Ninth we are familiar with, Kondrashin produced one that was swifter-moving and tauter, but that—even if it didn't achieve all the expressive effect of the other—could stand as a convincing and impressive realization of the score. Not so the *La Mer* conducted by Svetlanov. This is a work one thinks of as being more remote from Russian experience than the Mahler; and while the orchestra was able to produce every tonal subtlety the score called for, the conductor revealed his lack of understanding of what all the subtleties added up to by racing through them in tempos in which they added up to nothing.

The Czech Philharmonic, in its two appearances in Carnegie Hall's International Festival of Visiting Orchestras, turned out to be as disciplined and responsive a group as the Moscow Philharmonic and more brilliant in over-all sound, though still not as brilliant as the American orchestras. It was conducted by Ancerl in effective performances of Mozart's Overture to *Don Giovanni,* Smetana's to *The Bartered Bride,* his *Moldau,* his *Sárka,* which is another melodious but structurally less coherent tone-poem from the same cycle, and Dvořák's infrequently played and rather weak Symphony No. 6. Ancerl's performance of Dvořák's *New World* Symphony impressed some critics as one that imparted freshness to the overplayed work by its freedom from rhetorical underscoring; but my ears—which remembered how the work had been freed of this underscoring and revealed in its original shape and beauty by Toscanini's performance—heard the usual underscoring of points in Ancerl's performance. He also conducted *The Mystery of Time* by the contemporary Czech composer Kabelác—a passacaglia whose long crescendo of reiterated substance produced a diminuendo of interest. And Turnovsky conducted the orchestra efficiently in the arid Symphony No. 4 of Martinú.

Another concert in the Carnegie Hall festival gave me my first hearing of the Indianapolis Symphony under Izler Solomon, and my first experience—in their performance of Schubert's Ninth—of the poor orchestral playing and musical performances from which some communities in this country get their ideas of the orchestra literature. And the bored listeners in Indianapolis who read in *The New Yorker* that they had "one of the most magnificent orchestras in the country," with "all the power, refinement, accuracy, elasticity of reaction, transparency of tone, and everything else that the finest kind of orchestra *can* have," must have thought what Bernard Shaw imagined the audience saying reverently about "the feeble and mistuned scraping" at a

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performance of opera in London's East End: "This is classical music. This is above our heads, this is." The concert offered a new Symphonic Fantasy Op. 17 by Easley Blackwood—an assemblage of discordant sounds in which my ear could find no mutual coherence.

After all this I was in a position to appreciate the playing of the Philadelphia Orchestra—the sensitive execution and refined tonal splendors which it seemed almost impossible to believe I was hearing. The occasion was the opening concert of Carnegie Hall's special Philadelphia Orchestra series, which I attended in order to hear Mahler's uncompleted Symphony No. 10 as completed by Deryck Cooke. What was performed was Mahler's own full score of the first movement, an adagio, "with only a few [necessary] retouchings of the orchestration"; his incomplete full score of the second-movement, a scherzo, completed "from Mahler's short score and from equivalent earlier passages in the full score"; his full score of the first 30 bars of the brief third movement, and Cooke's similar orchestration of Mahler's short score of the remainder; Cooke's orchestration of Mahler's short score of the fourth movement, a second scherzo, "according to its few but significant indications of instrumentation," with some "additional harmonies and inner parts" in the middle section; and Cooke's orchestration of Mahler's short score of the finale, in which no "harmonic or contrapuntal additions proved necessary." What Cooke's scrupulous work produced sounded as though every note had been written by Mahler; but the writing was that of Mahler's later symphonies, which impresses and moves some listeners as much as that of the first four symphonies, but which I hear as an endless elaboration of inferior and often unattractive ideas. In the Symphony No. 6, which Leinsdorf performed with the Boston Symphony last year, it is an endless frenetic ranting; in the first and last movements of No. 10 it is an endless impassioned yearning for what is never achieved. Even in the earlier symphonies—for example in the attractive third movement of No. 2—Mahler keeps his progression going too long, unable to let it end, and compulsively adding yet another statement of what he has said repeatedly; but he makes this bearable and even interesting with the new orchestral invention that his fertile mind contrives for the additional repetition. What makes it unbearable in the first movement of No. 10 is that the section of impassioned yearning for the unachieved recurs unchanged, saying nothing more this time than it said at length the previous time; and this happens again in the finale. The two scherzos, unattractive in substance, also are excessively prolonged; and this leaves the brief third movement as the only enjoyable one.

Ormandy's dealing with music is something I haven't admired; and the performance of Haydn's little Symphony No. 7 (*Le Midi*) with which he began the concert provided no reason for a change of attitude. But the competence and the complete commitment he exhibited in the Mahler work, and the magnificent performance they produced,

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deserved the orchestra's gesture of remaining seated and applauding him when he signalled to it to rise and acknowledge the audience's applause with him.

The New School concert at which Alexander Schneider conducted a very small orchestra in the three symphonies—Nos. 90, 91 and 92 (*Oxford*)—that Haydn wrote for Count d'Ogny proved to be interesting in several ways. For one thing it enabled one to hear that the powers which produced the incandescent No. 92 achieved only unexciting routine exercises in Nos. 90 and 91. For another thing it demonstrated that whereas Nos. 90 and 91 were sufficiently enlivened by the performances of Schneider and his little group, No. 92 needed a virtuoso orchestra conducted by a Toscanini or a Cantelli for an effective realization of its incandescent writing. And finally it demonstrated that even a very small orchestra was too large for the New School auditorium.

A record with young Vladimir Ashkenazy's performances of Chopin's Ballades having acquainted me with his superb playing of both music and piano, I went to Carnegie Hall to hear his performances of Schubert's Sonatas Opp. 120 and 143, which offered an extraordinarily sensitive realization of the lovely lyricism and intimate feeling of much of the writing, and on occasion—in the grandiose opening movement of Op. 143—an impressive realization of the power Schubert also was capable of. I was unable to get into Hunter College for Ashkenazy's performance of Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata; but did hear him play Mozart's Sonata K.310, Schumann's Symphonic Etudes and Musorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* in Philharmonic Hall. In the first movement of the Mozart the drop to *piano* after the impassioned opening statement was made to what struck my ear as a *pianissimo* so delicate as to be without expressive relation to what had preceded it; and a similar drop occurred several times again in the course of the movement. But the melodic progression of the slow movement was superbly phrased, and the finale superbly enlivened. In Musorgsky's *Pictures* the long opening *Promenade* and its repetition before *Limoges* were played so fast as to convey the image of the spectator running rather than sauntering (in reply to a question Ashkenazy revealed that he did in fact think of the spectator as entering the exhibition and getting to the first picture as fast as he can, and again before *Limoges* hurrying from one hall to another); but these were the only questionable details in an imaginatively right and effective performance. And the beautiful performance of the Schumann work—in which Ashkenazy included several variations that are customarily omitted—was one to admire from first note to last.

The reviews of the Royal Danish Ballet—about the great company in exciting performances of a remarkably varied and interesting repertory—again reported what the reviewers wanted to see and

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imagined they saw, instead of what actually was presented to their eyes. The company is an excellent one, well-trained and well-rehearsed, and exhibiting an attractive sweetness and good manners, but also a lack of the sharpness and force we are accustomed to in the dancing of the New York City Ballet—this blandness being relieved only by the powerful personal styles of a few of the soloists—Bruhn, Kronstam, Kehlet. But it appeared this season in a repertory which ranged from mildly interesting to extremely boring. Mildly interesting were the few Bournonville ballets that have been in the company's repertory since their early-19th-century premieres—*La Sylphide,* Act 3 of *Napoli,* and, new this time, Act 1 of *Konservatoriet.* But whereas ten years ago the modern works included Fokine's *Les Sylphides* and *Petrushka* and Balanchine's *La Sonnambula,* this time there were none of these or of the other Balanchine pieces in the company's repertory, but only Ashton's boring evening-length *Romeo and Juliet,* Culberg's interminable *Miss Julie* and *Moon Reindeer,* a lesser Jerome Robbins product, *Fanfare,* Roland Petit's trashy *Carmen,* and a new piece, Flemming Flindt's *The Private Lesson,* whose movements offered nothing of interest beyond their detailing of the story of a psychopathic dancing teacher who is driven to kill his pupil. Of the classics of the ballet repertory there was only *Coppelia,* of which the Danish version this time seemed to me less effective than the Russian one performed by the Monte Carlo Ballet Russe years ago; moreover, the Danish dancers' execution of the simpler movements was unexciting, and the lift which a great dancer might have given to the performance with the personal radiance and magnetic compulsion of her Swanilda was something Ruth Anderson did not give to the performance I saw. Unexcitingly executed too were the exhibition dances in Act 3 of *Napoli,* except for Niels Kehlet's brilliant moments, until the crescendo of the final tarantella. But the company's quiet style was suitable for the exercises of the ballet class in Act 1 of *Konservatoriet,* which got a charming performance, with particularly lovely dancing by a girl named Lise la Cour.

Of the New York City Ballet's Christmas performances of Balanchine's *The Nutcracker* I saw one with Suzanne Farrell's exquisitely phrased dancing of the Sugar Plum Fairy, and with a new dancer, John Prinz, in the lead of Candy Canes. It seemed changed in a few details to fit his personal elegant style, which was more attractive than the unsuccessful attempts at the extraordinary speed and brilliance of Robert Barnett's original performance. The new scenery didn't improve with further acquaintance.

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JOHN SIMON

Theatre Chronicle

A TRICKY FELLOW, PETER WEISS. He writes or speaks in such as yet insufficiently explored art forms as the open letter and the interview, and has refined them to a point of Brechtianly artful dodging. He revises his political position and artistic intentions from one public statement to the next, and he has raised charges of misquotation, bowdlerization, and unauthorized publication to the level of dazzling rhetorical figures. Into this world of shifting meanings and stances, Weiss's play *Marat/Sade* fits perfectly. (I use the dehydrated version of the title; quoted in full, it feels too much like an infringement of the copyright laws.) The play is a house of mirrors, a fun palace, a many-bottomed valise whose final bottom is infinity. It is highly sophisticated theatre, but only a slender addition to the drama.

Günter Grass described *Marat/Sade* as a fine scenario for a ballet. More indulgently, one might call it a splendid stage metaphor. Historically, the play takes place in 1808, but the action of the play-within-the-play is laid in 1793, with flashbacks to still earlier times; however, the use of anachronism situates the play in our present—if not, indeed, in anybody's. Politically, the play is an extended and often interrupted agon between Sade the individualist and rational anti-rationalist, and Marat the fanatical populist and would-be reformer, so that the debate would seem to be between aristocratic and hedonistic self-realization and Marxism—except that this Marat is a brainchild of Sade's and, therefore, not real, and that Sade may be a madman and, therefore, likewise unreal. Which brings us to the philosophical plane, where the question is who is mad and who is sane, or what is reality and what illusion? The dramatis personae are almost all lunatics, but they are, to the best of their abilities, performing a text, presumably sane. They tend, however, to revert to themselves—at times manifestly, at times, perhaps, covertly. When are they real? When they are performing an ostensibly coherent play by a possible madman, or when they burst into the very genuine symptoms of their madness? And how sane is the madhouse director who encourages this dubious psychodrama for therapeutic reasons, but who, whenever the play moves toward disquieting truths, resorts to crass censorship? Can truth become dangerous, unhealthy, insane? And how real and sane are we, the theatre audience made to impersonate those thrill-hungry worldlings who flocked to Charenton, like so many voyeurs, to see the inmates disport themselves dramatically or, better yet, dementedly? We see ourselves attacked in the play, our weaknesses magnified (but not falsified) by the madmen, and we laugh and applaud. Madness this side of the footlights, or that side—or both?

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Even anecdotally the play is an ambiguity: in the final chaos, it is impossible to assess who or what triumphs, if anything does. And formally, the play fluctuates between the doggerel of the medieval morality and the free verse of contemporary looseness. The raucous song interludes contribute yet another disturbing dimension. In every possible labyrinthine way, the implicated spectators are confounded and disoriented, until their *dépaysement* is complete. *Marat/Sade* begins at the confluence of Brechtian alienation, Pirandellian illusionism, and Artaudian shock treatment, and follows them to where they conjointly debouch into the sea of the absurd.

Beyond this complex and absorbing conceit, the play offers little more than a handsome occasion for a spectacular production. Indeed, a brilliant Polish stage director, Konrad Swinarski, helped Weiss with the play, and, no doubt, contributed largely to its remarkable stageworthiness. The play, whose confrontations and clevernesses fail to crystallize into true insight, will survive as one of the dandiest theatrical pretexts, showering its largesse on the director. And Peter Brook has seized the opportunity and kneaded it into what I do not hesitate to call a perfect production.

The set consists of brick walls of a greyish beige, benches alongside the walls, various tiled pits (this is the bathhouse of the asylum) and slatted wooden screens to cover some of these pits. The screens are first seen in a circular arrangement on the raked floor, but subsequently undergo the wildest transformations to suggest a variety of objects or settings constantly reshaping an evidently putty world. In come the madmen, putty-colored themselves, a breathing compendium of aberrancies, a staring, stumbling, mumbling, gesticulating, tic-ridden or catatonic mass, now scurrying about like balls of mercury on a glass surface, now lapsing into drained, comatose blankness. On stage left is a podium on which sit the smug asylum director and his insipid ladies who mostly ogle and chirp at the audience. In the proscenium boxes are bands of lunatic musicians (this is one of many Brookian improvements; according to the original text, the band is non-histrionic and is on stage) who, besides playing Richard Peaslee's animated tunes in hectic arrangements, provide a running commentary of addled reactions to the play. And there is one solid object on a centerstage dais: the tub in which Marat is confined by his skin disease (or the cage in which the paranoiac playing Marat is constrained): a large, dark metal boot, a symbol of might that crushes but also constricts.

I wish I could itemize some of the sardonic, tantalizing, unnerving stage images—as often out of Brook as out of Weiss—that ensue, a ceaselessly bubbling cauldron of laughing horrors and satanic whimsies. Thus Brook has conceived of having the mock-executed madmen jump into one of the bath pits, till only a heap of heads bobs above stage level; as the decapitations occur, a bucket of blood is casually emptied: red for plain folks, blue for aristocrats, black for a villain, and white

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for a savior like Marat. Imagine a welter of visual and aural devices among which the dialogue weaves in and out, modest enough to begin with and forced into increasing self-effacement.

It is true that Brook's production shows some departures from the excellent, though often rather ungrammatical, English version, whose prose sections are by Geoffrey Skelton and verse sequences by Adrian Mitchell.[1] The English text, moreover, takes not infrequent liberties with Weiss's original. But this hardly matters when the acting itself is enough to overwhelm one. It would be an insult to single out any actor as better or worse than the rest: the entire cast is a marvelous, macabre, tentacular monster with some forty heads and one hundred and sixty limbs, rehearsed to grim perfection by that master-monster trainer, Peter Brook. However much one may regret the rudimentariness of the ideas and their development, however little the words may climb above flat adequacy, the production is something like an ironic and thoroughly successful set of illustrations for Dante's *Inferno,* adding what such illustrations usually lack: the hellish laughter.

Another, smaller-scale, postlapsarian freak show is afforded us by John Osborne's *Inadmissible Evidence.* Here damnation has made its filthy lair in the first form of the divine, the word. Osborne is one of the foremost writers of monologues for the modern theatre; though he can compose a passage for several voices, give him that single instrument, the angry or whining human voice, and he will wrest from it all kinds of double stops: comic plangencies, torrential trivialities, staccato fusillades of all-consuming spite, and whimpering cadenzas of self-pity and self-hate. The play relates the crack-up of Bill Maitland, a seedy East-London solicitor: the crazily spiraling tensions with his staff, clients, and women—wife, mistresses, daughter—leading up to the ultimate breakdown.

As usual with Osborne, there are two deficiencies: lack of sufficient form and lack of wholly convincing motivation. It is as though neurosis were its own begetter, its own sustenance, and its own final cause; it is not to be questioned any more than arrested, its reasons and consequences the unshakable *données* of the protagonist's life. Can it be that this is as it should be: is the case history of Bill Maitland really the case of Maitland vs. Maitland, or of Maitland vs. Everything? Is what is required not psychological analysis but litigation? What is surely not required is a red herring of a prologue, the sterile repetitiousness of the second act, and such total irrelevancy as the semi-ironic, semi-abject paean to the younger generation that Maitland delivers to his bored and resentful daughter, not half so bored and resentful as I was in the audience.

But the first act, and even a fraction of the second, can be marveled at and enjoyed as the fusion of a mighty cataclysm with a bagful of bitter jokes, combining in extraordinary defiance of all scientific and

[1] Published here by Atheneum: $4.50, $1.95.

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dramatic laws. Maitland is a mini-Machiavel of engrossing, though festering, vitality; he is as witty and funny as he is beastly, but his very beastliness is shot through with twitches of abortive humanity. This petty character manages to loom large; his defeat, or self-defeat, concerns us: there but for a stroke of luck sink we into the quicksands of the irrational.

Perfectly embodying Osborne's sourly scintillating humor, there sits, slouches and sidles, groans, grumbles and fulminates Nicol Williamson, an actor whose looks, sounds, and movements have a heroic asymmetry, who emits a truculent lopsidedness that mauls our eyes and ears. Take his face: is it cadaverous or fleshly? It squiggles in both directions. Take his voice: is it an outrage or a joke? Mere phonemes become laden with ambivalence. Never absent from the stage throughout the play, Williamson prestidigitates more than he acts: our stock responses to Maitland are kept dextrously in abeyance. Around him, there is a highly efficient cast, in which only Ted van Griethuysen and Madeleine Sherwood, the two un-British members, prove unequal to the needed flexibility. Jocelyn Herbert has designed a properly dreary set, and Anthony Page has directed with a nice sense of pacing and spacing. The virtues of this play and production should outlive the flaws, though one wishes that the penetrating Osborne who wrote the first act had not yielded his typewriter to the diffuse and prolix Osborne who wrote the second.

The new Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre has followed up its mishandled production of *Danton's Death* with an almost equally mismanaged rendition of *The Country Wife*. Contrasted with Etherege, Wycherley reveals, according to Rudolf Stamm, *"einen gröberen Witz,"* but also the skill of constructing *"wirksamere Handlungen."* In this production, the action may not prove particularly effective, but the wit certainly is coarse. Yet for this coarseness to mean anything—a rake's passing himself off as impotent in order to cuckold husbands with their blessing, and a country lass's taking to adultery as a tot to making mudpies—the wit must play off its crudeness against the pseudo-refinement of the ambience. What cynicism and corruption are here; what crazed extremes, from Pinchwife, who is more turnkey than husband to his bride, to Sparkish, who keeps throwing his intended at his lustful crony's head. For these men and women the world revolves around a genital axis; one thinks of the apostrophe to the vagina in *Sodom,* "This is the ware house of the world's chief Trade,/ On this soft anvil all mankind was made." Only in *The Country Wife* reproduction is not even mentioned, mass production, "Trade," is all—but always in the kid gloves of style, under the rose of elegance, with the firm conviction that wickedness is the supreme form of innocence.

Precious little of all this reaches the stage of the Vivian Beaumont. The Repertory Theatre does indeed command a repertoire of accents from Bay Area to Brooklyn, but the polished British tones that alone

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can make the cadences of Restoration phraseology fall pleasurably on our ears are scarcely within its compass. The acting itself is undistinguished, though Priscilla Pointer's Lady Fidget is definitely on the right track, and, for a glimmer or two, Stacy Keach captures something of Horner. Robert Symonds's direction is erratic: to make Sparkish (whom Symonds himself plays) into a pathetic buffoon rather than a preposterous, possibly homosexual, fop, is novel but untenable. Sets and costumes are perfunctory, and whenever the production is in doubt, it hopefully rolls out the turntables. Alas, they might as well rely on a centrifuge, for all the homogeneity they achieve.

At that, *The Country Wife* never sank to the level of Circle in the Square's *The White Devil,* directed by Jack Landau. *The White Devil* is arguably as good as *The Duchess of Malfi,* which makes it very good indeed. After Landau and his cast get through with their severely cut, modern-dress version, it might as well be called *The Poor Devil.* If there is such a thing as ensemble non-acting, this is it. By the time I caught the production, Eric Berry was no longer in it; but of all the actors I saw, only Frank Langella as Flamineo displayed understanding of what he was doing and a sense of style. Even so, the part could have used a little more masculinity, and Langella did not rise to its ultimate tragic heights. Of the others, it is more charitable to say nothing, though I cannot help wondering how such a major part as that of Lodovico could have gone, even in this production, to a performer without a shred of presence or a minimum of intelligibility.

Landau's staging is uninspired and crude to the point of allowing Frederic Warriner to camp up the part of Camillo, and letting Cornelia deliver one of the most beautiful English dirges, "Call for the robin-redbreast and the wren," in the manner of a rambling madwoman—for the sake of a bit of misplaced naturalism, farewell poetry! But not even to Webster's most explicit lines does Landau pay attention. Francisco is played with a Hathaway eye patch, though at one point he plainly refers to closing his (plural) eyes. Vittoria's hair is compared to a "blackbird's feather," yet Carrie Nye is stridently blonde. Even the costuming makes no sense: Francisco's Moorish disguise becomes a monk's hood and cape, and, of all things, dark glasses. To prevent the hood from slipping too far back, Robert Burr must nod continually like a worry-bird, and it is a mystery how Zanche can fall in love with him on first sight through all those integuments. Ah well, what are we to expect from a production in which "alms" is pronounced "olms"? May ablivion engolf it!

I remember William Alfred reading, some dozen years ago in Harvard's Sanders Theatre, from his verse play, *Hogan's Goat.* I recall being impressed by his reading and unimpressed by his writing. The American Place Theatre has now given *Hogan's Goat* a compact and tidy production, but the play continues to be sprawling, sentimental melodrama decked out with verse that smacks of a Christopher Fry

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hopped up on Sean O'Casey. Oh, the heart is in the right place in this tale of an 1890 scandal that cost an eagerly aspiring immigrant-Irish publican the mayoralty of Brooklyn; and his passionate young spouse, her life. But plays do not live by heart and vaulting metaphors alone. In an interview, Alfred declared his love for Katharine Cornell, and *Hogan's Goat* is fairly drenched in Cornell and Guthrie McClintic, though a trained nose may even catch a whiff of Maxwell Anderson. Nevertheless, this is not really an offensive play, merely a benighted one. It does, in any case, attempt to create plot and characters, and even if these Irish priests, politicos, ward-heelers, floozies, biddies, and bibbers have worn their garments of lovable local color hopelessly threadbare, and even if the romantic and political intrigues, clashes, and lightning revelations are smudged with the thumbprints of countless popular dramatists, there is here an old-fashioned love of old-fashioned theatre for which one may heave a sympathetic sigh.

Frederick Rolf's staging is suited to the nature of the play, and the production is well designed by Kert Lundell. The acting is always workmanlike, though Ralph Waite makes the hero rather more uninteresting than he already is. The whole thing, with all its lapses, has a professional finish to it, which, along with the built-in prestige of verse drama, had the reviewers tossing nosegays at Mr. Alfred with both hands, to which he responded by promising to turn *Hogan's Goat* into a trilogy, instead of quitting while he is ahead.

Broadway's three successful musicals can be dealt with fairly summarily. *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever* has a heavyhanded and pretentious book by Alan Jay Lerner, who also wrote the remarkably winded lyrics; Burton Lane's tunes, though short on truly personal flavor, possess a winning innocence. Herbert Ross's choreography is routine, except for a would-be daring sex ballet which is embarrassingly inept. Most of the performers maintain a prudent inconspicuousness, to which Clifford David is the unhappy, and Barbara Harris the happy, exception. Miss Harris deploys charms and skills that are legion; it is not her fault if this vapid tale of reincarnation fails to come to life even once.

Skyscraper is a free adaptation of Elmer Rice's *Dream Girl,* which was not good to begin with and remains so after being freely adapted. This one has another Harris, Julie, burdened with the weight of all its leaden nothings, and she turns out to be far less redeeming than her namesake. Equally disappointing is the formerly hilarious James Nelson Reilly, who proves poor at dialects and all too good at camping. Michael Kidd's dances, however, are sassy and effective for the most part, and Robert Randolph's scenery is jauntily functional. The songs, by the experienced team of Cahn and Van Heusen, sound curiously neophytic, and are marked chiefly by supererogatory semibreves appended to quite conventional phrases.

In *Man of La Mancha,* Dale Wasserman has framed a comic-strip

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retelling of *Don Quixote* with an imaginary incident from the life of its author: to stop rough fellow-prisoners of the Inquisition from burning the manuscript of his masterpiece, Cervantes gets them to act out the highlights of the novel. This enables Wasserman to be simplistic about life in the main story, and pietistic about art in the frame. Mitch Leigh's music is consummately unmusical, its grey monotone squeezed out like dirty water from a kitchen mop. To this, Joe Darion has provided sickeningly sanctimonious lyrics, e.g.: "And yet how lovely life would seem/ If every man could weave a dream/ To keep him from despair . . ." (You said it, Darion; back to the loom!) or "To dream the impossible dream,/ To fight the unbeatable foe,/ . . . To right the unrightable wrong,/ To reach the unreachable star," etc. etc. As Neruda wrote in a poem, *"mi corazón fué interminable"*—there is no end to the melting heart of *Man of La Mancha:* it sweats, oozes, dribbles or gushes out of every pore of this spongy mass. In his dances, Jack Cole tries to right the unrightable balance by introducing bits of nastiness, say, a sado-masochistic mass rape, which only proves distasteful in a different way.

But it must be conceded that Howard Bay's sets work with utmost persuasion on the ANTA Washington Square Theatre's open stage, and that Albert Marre has directed the show with every kind of resourcefulness and variety that could possibly be grafted onto it. Marre and Bay are, in fact, to be credited with having put the open stage, sneaking up on us from everywhere of late, to the most startlingly efficacious use in a long time. The cast is uneven, ranging from Irving Jacobson, who hideously travesties Sancho as a Bronx tailor, to Robert Rounseville, who, by dint of having a good voice and nothing much to do, emerges unscathed. The producers, apparently out of some dark initial inklings, provided no intermission; but the audience, instigated in part by the grotesquely favorable notices, laps it all up, and would stay, seemingly, for several more hours of rousing spectacle and moral uplift. As I listened, dismayed, to the cataracts of ecstatic comment and hurricanoes of applause bursting around me, I reflected sadly that what needs reviewing is not so much our theatre as our audience and reviewers.

Cactus Flower is an adaptation of a French boulevard farce into what hopefully bills itself as "a comedy by Abe Burrows." The plot concerns a dapper young dentist who keeps a mistress at just the right distance by inventing an imaginary wife and children; but when, under the pressure of her suicide attempt, he finally decides to marry the mistress, he is in trouble. For the mistress wants a dispensation from the wife and children, and our dentist is forced to enlist his sarcastic, old-maidish nurse to enact his wife and drum up some children. The jokes are based on a reversal of the old formula: instead of a real wife, we get a stand-in; instead of a jealous mistress, a scrupulously solicitous one. But otherwise everything is tried and tested,

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except for some of the wisecracks, which, without exactly being new, have a way of sounding tryingly untested. For example: "How do you like children?—Grilled, medium rare." There are a few honest laughs, though, stemming mostly from Barry Nelson's superior comic acting of the dentist, and from Lauren Bacall's ubiquitous grace and wit, improbable as they may be in a supposedly prim nurse. And there is something to be said for an occasional Burrows flash such as, "I hear the April in Paris Ball will be delightful this year—very few Frenchmen."

The reviewers have been lavish in their praise of A.P.A.'s revival of *You Can't Take It With You:* much was made of its nostalgic charm and of the delicacy, rather than frenzy, with which Ellis Rabb was seen to have staged it. I am sorry to have to disagree, but the Kaufman and Hart farce seems to me the product of that wishy-washy period after the Depression and before the Spanish Civil War, when one laughed at thwarted income tax collectors, amiable anarchists, sedulously untalented lady playwrights, White Russian duchesses turned Schrafft's waitresses, shuffling Negroes, stuffily sexless millionaires, and matters of similar import. But as Eric Bentley reminds us in *The Life of the Drama,* "Without aggression farce cannot function. The effects we call 'farcical' dissolve and disappear." This is particularly true of the production under discussion, which, perhaps aware that the jokes have lost their miniscule sting, attempts to swathe the proceedings in a gentle haze of amused recollection. The haze, however, proves a shroud of deadening uninvolvement, as when, in a much-lauded love scene between honest but canny working girl and timid but endearing boss's son, budding lovers palpitate, fumble, and pussyfoot in adorable fashion, but elicit something no better than crocodile tears—crocodile smiles.

Ellis Rabb's moonstruck pacing, then, merely calls attention to the play's shoddiness, and matters bog down further in the generally fuzzy performing. Especially inept contributions—or deductions—are made by Gordon Gould, Joseph Bird, Donald Moffat, and Patricia Conolly, and even such usually dependable actors as Sydney Walker and Keene Curtis muff most of their chances. Clayton Corzatte, as the young lover, is unbearably smarmy, and Rosemary Harris, as his inamorata, slaps on a characterization that, even by farce standards, lacks conviction. A few others, notably Nat Simmons as the Uncle Tom figure, and James Greene as the bewildered Internal Revenue man, achieve a blissful precision; but it is not comforting to remember that neither of them is a regular member of the repertory group.

Two recent demises should be briefly mentioned, if only because there are lessons that must not be buried with them. Edward Albee's adaptation of James Purdy's *Malcolm* is the first play by Albee to displease, as far as I can gather, everybody, from the lowest TV reviewer to the highest camp underground. No need to hurl imprecations after

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a paltry horror that fizzled with merciful promptness, but I would urge Albee, and anyone else who continues to believe in adaptations of novels for the stage, to reconsider—or just consider. As for John Whiting's *The Devils,* a play not so bad that a better production could not have made it look good, its quick passing demonstrates, first, that a flashily superficial director like Michael Cacoyannis will, given a historical play, make an unfortunate spectacle both of it and of himself; and, secondly, that American stage stars are about as limited as their movie counterparts. Jason Robards seemed to be imitating Richard Burton when he was not imitating himself, and read his lines like a child that, unable to put together a jigsaw puzzle, throws away the pieces in all directions. As for Anne Bancroft, her hysterical Mother Superior was, to be sure, a superior hysteric, but an inferior everything else.

CHARLES W. MILLARD

The Guggenheim Museum Revisited

THIS YEAR REPRESENTS SOMETHING OF A WATERSHED in the history of the Guggenheim Museum. Completed well over six years ago, the museum has been standing and open long enough to permit the formation of a considered evaluation of it both as an architectural space and as a place in which to exhibit art. It has also reached the end of what might be called its "first period," and is now finding it necessary to expand its physical plant to cope with growing collections and staff functions. Plans have recently been announced for a multi-storey building to be constructed adjacent to and behind the present structure on a design drawn up by Frank Lloyd Wright's associates at Taliesin. More concretely, the museum has opened a new gallery designed to hold the collection of Justin Tannhauser, which will find its permanent home there. It is this gallery, by its very improvised quality, that points up the accomplishment of the original space. The Tannhauser gallery opens off the final ramp but one, and was created by throwing together a library, offices, a mail room, and a staff lounge. The resulting space is awkward and ambivalent, with neither strong character nor direction, two characteristics so positively present in the main museum space. Its labyrinthine nature is emphasized by a sort of compartmentation that prevents the visitor from seeing from one

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part of the gallery into another, and thus grasping the nature of the entire space at one moment. This is directly contrary to one of the features that is a glory of the main structure. Furthermore, the oddly angled walls and ceilings, which no doubt made sense when divided up as independent rooms, interfere more jarringly with the works of art than the ramp ever did. And finally, the museum has allowed Mr. Tannhauser himself to choose the backgrounds for the paintings. While this is certainly laudable deference to a generous donor, it hardly results in either the most professional or the most satisfactory display. The walls are hung with a patterned red-dyed denim (one wonders if this was suggested by the Metropolitan Museum's much happier use of this material in its Renaissance galleries several years ago) which makes the entire gallery seem like a gaping wound in the side of the building, and the floor space is cluttered with potted plants and punctuated with a small fountain. The overall effect is rather like that of a decaying Edwardian hotel lobby, and totally unsuited to the strong, clean, and generally fine pictures hung there. One wishes that the museum had taken the top ramp, now used for storage, for the Tannhauser pictures, and converted the space now used for them into storage. The new gallery succeeds only in emphasizing the powerful simplicity of Wright's conception in the main building, as well as the drawbacks inherent in the entire building as a place in which to exhibit paintings.

Ever since it opened, it has been obvious that the Guggenheim is primarily a museum of human beings, and that the people circulating within it compete for attention with whatever paintings may be hung there. In looking across and down from the top of the ramp, it is invariably the shifting patterns of human movement that catch the eye. Not only are paintings dwarfed by the scale of the building, but their uncompromisingly rectangular shapes seem to fight the smooth descending spiral of the ramp. Furthermore, no single work of art can be comfortably contemplated in the museum, since any attempt to lean against the parapet and look at one for longer than a few seconds is rewarded with an initially imperceptible slow sliding movement down the ramp, much as if one were sliding down a bannister. The psychological pull downward in the building is irresistible and, under most circumstances, extremely disconcerting.

If, however, the Guggenheim is an unsatisfactory building in which to exhibit paintings, it is much less so for sculpture, as the exhibition of the Hirshhorn Collection (October 1962—January 1963) showed. The collection had been very well installed, it is true, but it was essentially the nature of the objects themselves that made the presentation more successful than anything done previously. The irregular contours of the sculpture created a less staccato pattern than that of the paintings usually exhibited, and when the exhibition was viewed

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from the top of the ramp one saw less a series of distinct entities than a continuous downward movement. Furthermore, the sculpture was mounted not only against the walls, but everywhere within the space of the ramp, and in descending one moved through and around the works exhibited, which themselves created a flowing space analogous to that of the building. This effect was enhanced by the analogy of the time demanded to move through the building with that necessary to grasp the sculpture fully in three dimensions.

The Museum's greatest triumph, however, has certainly been the Alexander Calder show (November 1964—January 1965), and almost no review of that exhibition failed to point out how superbly the building and Calder's mobile sculpture worked together. Since the Guggenheim is itself, by implication, a moving shape, the effect when it is filled with objects that move, in addition to people, is intoxicating—rather, as one visitor put it, like that of a fun house. Mobiles are ideal for the museum because their movement makes them devoid of static, geometric shape and they create no struggle between such a shape and that of the building. They emphasize once again the Guggenheim's perfect fitness for certain functions other than that it serves and —by contrast—its weaknesses as a museum. When the building was first opened, someone suggested that it would make an admirable aquarium. Apart from the obvious facetiousness of the remark, it is one of the most perceptive comments ever made about the museum. The entire space has a somewhat subaquaeous feeling because of its shape and the glass dome above it, rather as if it were the inside of a bubble or of a chambered nautilus. This feeling is emphasized by the window on the main floor which looks out below street level, making one feel even further submerged. Fish, moreover, are in constant movement, and their ceaseless slow swimming motion would be the perfect complement to one's movement along the ramp. There would be, too, less reason to stop for long periods on the downward walk, and fish tanks would take up entire bays along the ramp, giving a far more unified effect than the postage-stamp arrangement of pictures one generally sees.

In making this criticism of the building one must remember that the present effect is precisely what Wright intended. He wanted the paintings to be seen as things in themselves, each standing out "like a signet in a ring." This effect has been admirably achieved by arranging for them to be hung away from the walls and without frames. Unfortunately, Wright failed to consider that the most important function of a museum is generally not the isolation of works of art, but their exhibition in meaningful conjunction, so that together they make a statement not made individually. Such a display method, which at its best brings works of art to a sort of life that may not be apparent when they are hung alone, is most easily achieved in spaces having some congruity to the shape of the works shown. This fact,

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which is the very reason for the success of the Calder exhibition, is also the reason that the building is inadequate for showing more conventional works.

The functional limitations of the Guggenheim as a museum do not, however, interfere with its greatness as a work of art in its own right. It is the final and most important statement of the integration of solid, void, and ornament toward which Wright moved throughout his career, and represents the attainment of three of his most cherished aims. First, it achieves almost complete absorption of ornament into the fabric of the building. Second, it is Wright's most sophisticated use of the centrifugal plan. And third, it is the most successful example of spatial unification in his work.

Although Wright's negative attitude toward applied decoration remained constant from the beginning, his use of such decoration varied considerably. In one of his earliest works, the Winslow house, he used a good deal of Sullivan-type shallow relief ornament, arranging it in a continuous band below the eaves, separated from the lower portion of the building by a molding. In effect, the ornament served a structurally expressive function by distinguishing the first from the second storey. Almost immediately, however, such ornament disappeared entirely from Wright's work, to be replaced in structures like the prairie houses and the Larkin building in Buffalo by the interplay of light and shadow created by the juxtaposition of vertical and horizontal masses. Just before the First World War there was another efflorescence of applied ornament on Wright's buildings. Midway Gardens, the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, and several of his California houses during the period 1910–1925 were covered with fantastic ornament. This was generally either shallow relief decoration, creating a pattern of light and shade across wall surfaces which tended to deny their solidity as wall, or pinnacle-like vertical protrusions, functioning visually to break up the mass of the buildings they adorned. Such decoration was thoroughly at home on such projects as Midway Gardens, a Chicago beer garden, but considerably less so on domestic commissions.

After 1925, ornament came gradually to be absorbed into the structure of Wright's buildings. He did this partly by using materials in a decorative way, as with the fieldstone at "Falling Water," or the emphasized horizontal brick joints (much like those of the prairie houses) and glass tubing at the Johnson Wax building in Racine. Partly it was done in the actual shapes of the buildings themselves. Wright's plans, and the three-dimensional forms projected from them, became complex groupings of hexagons, ovals, circles, and other geometric shapes. One of the best examples of this decorative use of form is the soaring, folded triangular roof of the First Unitarian Church in Madison, but it shows up again and again in houses, the buildings for Florida Southern College, and many other projects. The greatest state-

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ment of this amalgamation of decoration and free, fanciful form is the Guggenheim Museum, for here the entire building functions as one ornamental form. Its all-enveloping decorative quality is reinforced by such details as the structure of the dome, the round windows along one side, and the imaginative shapes of the window mullions in the administration building. In this final synthesis, form has become decoration and decoration, form. There is no need for further enrichment—no need, unfortunately, for painting and sculpture.

The museum also represents the culmination of Wright's use of the centrifugal plan, or what Giedion has called the "windmill" plan. From the first prairie houses, nearly every Wright building had a central focus, most often a chimney or service core, from which the various elements of the structure extended. Since Wright's plans were always two-dimensional projections of three-dimensional conceptions, the building themselves had an analogous diminishing effect. A concentration of masses, particularly vertical masses, at the center created a focal visual density which trailed off in a series of masses of diminishing size. As early as the Larkin building, however, Wright used a void rather than a concentration of masses as the focus of his nondomestic structures. The Johnson Wax building and the Morris store in San Francisco are two other examples of this type of planning, of which the Guggenheim Museum is the culmination and epitome, for it was in the Guggenheim that Wright most successfully combined the centrifugal plan and the central void. The problem he faced in making this combination was that a central void required delimitation by walls and could not be continued outward to apparent infinity, as could a series of diminishing solids merging a building into its surroundings. The solution made in the Guggenheim was to use a circular rather than a square central void and to broaden it slowly as it rose. The spiral shape of the museum gave Wright a perfectly controlled form which integrated centrality and centrifugality as he had never been able to do before. The building returns upon itself at the same time that it rises outward, simultaneously contracting and expanding in a tightly controlled motion.

The final and most important form of integration for which the Guggenheim stands is the achievement of complete spatial continuity. From the time of his first houses, Wright sought to eliminate compartmentation within his buildings and make them as nearly as possible single large spaces broken down into elements fitting into one another so as to give privacy and a feeling of shelter without the traditional sequence of rooms. He arranged his spaces vertically as well as horizontally, and used half-floors, slight changes of level, and two floor ceiling heights to create in three dimensions the spatial continuity his walls defined in two. At first, these continuous interior spaces were controlled with straight or right-angled walls to which Wright referred as "bent planes," producing an almost cubist effect

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despite Wright's strong dislike of Cubism. With the introduction of other geometric, and particularly circular, forms, the possibilities for spatial integration became far more subtle and complex, and it is in the Guggenheim that such integration reached its simple but sophisticated climax. The museum, as distinguished from the administration and service areas which surround it, is a single circular space, within which Wright achieved a feeling of spatial variety by using the parapet of the ramp as a visual division between the core space and the ramp space, and by allowing intrusions into the ramp space which vary one's spatial experience as one descends. To maintain spatial unity Wright introduced a counter-curve in the ramp, wrapped around a service core, which forces the visitor into the space of the central void once in each descending revolution. Furthermore, he used one of the smaller service cores rather like a gigantic toothpick to hold the core space and the ramp space together. It is a round element which starts at the topmost point of the ramp entirely within the ramp space, and ends at the bottommost point entirely within the core space. Eliminating floor levels by projecting a circular plan into three dimensions, Wright found a masterful solution to the problem of spatial continuity. Always interested in the feeling of containment, however, he carefully differentiated the inside of his building from the outside, and although the inside is the negative of the outside it is perfectly distinct from it. The two are inseparable and mutually expressive, but in no way continuous spatially. Wright has, instead, manipulated his exterior spaces in such a way that they too form a continuum. The curving lines of the planting areas and the building walls at the entrance suck the space of the front of the building through to the back and make it envelop the masses in a unifying embrace. The projections and recessions above and below the long horizontal "facade" enhance this effect and are instrumental in tying the museum's various parts together. The exterior and interior spaces are connected visually only through the large window on the main floor which looks onto a sunken garden of precisely delimited dimensions. Wright's sole means of identifying the interior space with indefinite exterior space would have been to have used a transparent dome. He chose instead to return the interior space once more upon itself by constructing the dome of heavy ribs and frosting its glass.

The Guggenheim Museum, which is a high-water mark of Wright's greatness as an architect, embodies the harmonious integration of form and ornament, of centrality and centrifugality, after which he strove all his life. It is its greatness of form that makes it a great work of art, despite the fact that this seriously interferes with it as a satisfactory space in which to exhibit other such works.

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ROGER SALE

High Mass and Low Requiem[1]

MURIEL SPARK, IRIS MURDOCH, JOHN UPDIKE, Ross Macdonald, Brian Moore, George P. Elliott, Graham Greene—really, that is quite a roster. Anyone interested only in masterpieces or new trends can easily survey it with sighs of impending boredom, and probably no one would want to go to the stake for more than two or three of these writers. But novel readers know them as serious practitioners working by now in an arena that includes more than themselves and their contemporaries. Even enthusiastic admirers would probably agree their fate will be some kind of label—"English lady novelist, a Catholic, I think," "California guy, writes about private detectives"—in 1950 Vance Bourjaily and Calder Willingham were lights on the road to Parnassus, in 1940 Rex Warner and Rosamond Lehmann, and ten years before that a brilliant novelist named William Gerhardi. Nonetheless, each of the present writers has been blessed with both talent and luck and so each has been taken seriously by serious people; each has been restless and prolific enough to write one or more novels not indicative of continual growth, some of which were simply bad; each works in the dark, does what he can, gives what he has, and so probably has had moments when he recognizes that his fate will be mostly memories and a listing in *Twentieth Century Authors*.

Any writer who goes on after he has given signs of having done his best work earns both careful attention if that best work was very good and, inevitably, patronizing gestures of disappointment and encouragement. High mass and low requiem. A sober judgment to the effect that Muriel Spark is salvaging her career is bound to seem patronizing, yet were there no *Memento Mori* in the background *The Mandelbaum Gate* would not be read even that charitably by many readers. For it is not only the special admirer who

[1] THE MANDELBAUM GATE, by *Muriel Spark*. Knopf. $5.95. THE SCHATTEN AFFAIR, by *Frederic Morton*. Athenæum. $5.00. THE NOWHERE CITY, by *Alison Lurie*. Coward-McCann, $4.50. BLACK MONEY, by *Ross Macdonald*. Knopf. $3.95. THE RED AND THE GREEN, by *Iris Murdoch*. Viking. $5.00. THE EMPEROR OF ICE CREAM, by *Brian Moore*. Viking. $4.95. OF THE FARM, by *John Updike*. Knopf. $3.95. BRIDGEPORT BUS, by *Maureen Howard*. Harcourt, Brace & World. $4.95. AFTER JULIUS, by *Elizabeth Jane Howard*. Viking. $4.95. IN THE WORLD, by *George P. Elliott*. Viking. $6.95. THE COMEDIANS, by *Graham Greene*. Viking. $5.75.

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determinedly looks for encouraging signs; we all know that anyone who can descend as low as *The Girls of Slender Means* and who can come back with a book even as good as *The Mandelbaum Gate* cannot be safely ignored in the future. Of course those interested in masterpieces and new trends find this whole process of evaluating unfinished careers very tedious; of course it is easier to praise Frederic Morton, Alison Lurie, Maureen Howard, and Elizabeth Jane Howard because they are newer to their careers and have just written their best books to date. Writers who are constantly getting better allow one to hope wildly, and no one in his right mind will do that with Muriel Spark. But fortunately, to reward tedious patience and inveterate novel readers this quarter, there is Graham Greene, who has had his career go smash at least twice and who, at sixty-one, has written his best book in more than twenty years.

But first, Mrs. Spark. The Mandelbaum Gate divides Jerusalem into Arab and Israeli, and so, as the ideal tourist of the world around the gate, we have Barbara Vaughan, an English schoolteacher, half Catholic, half Jew. Barbara's difficulties with being two people not only reflect the splitness of her world but also allow her author to get an Amblerish plot underway because people on both sides of the gate inevitably distrust at least half of her. As long as Barbara is only an ideal tourist, the book is fine, for Mrs. Spark is adept indeed at playing off biblical past and sight-seeing present without falling into simple satire:

> A year later, on the summit of Mount Tabor, where the warrior poet, Deborah, once mustered her troops against an enemy of the Lord named Sisera, Barbara turned and gazed out towards the Dead Sea, where her lover now was working on the site of Qumram. . . . She could not remember when first she had associated her Jewishness with her sexual instincts and distinguished herself from her Gentile relatives by a half-guilty feeling that she was more afflicted by sex than they were.

It may be a little sly, but in the fourth chapter of *Judges* it turns out that that warrior poet also had that Jewish affliction with sex, and that she fought on Mount Tabor with *her* lover, Barak. At other places the allusions are more openly worked out, and we even have a neat hedging injunction against people who quote Scripture—the Holy Land, thus, is toured with wit and grace. But as we become entangled in needlessly tricky flashbacks and shifts in plot it becomes clear that Mrs. Spark really thinks God is moving that story in ways wondrous to behold—the Holy Land is the earth, we are all tourists, etc. At the climax God trumps the ace of a meddling lesbian who wants to hold on to Barbara, the enemy is an instrument of God's grace, Barbara is left a spirit free of splits. The imposition of such heavy weight on a slight story is not only itself embarrassing

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but also responsible for the book's loss of the sense of place that had been its strength. But the final smugness—and this is something easier for readers of Mrs. Spark to see than for beginners—seems more something resorted to than determinedly fixed from the beginning, and so those who have followed this writer into the bogs of vulgarity really do have something to be happy about and look forward to.

With two other tourist novelists one does not need to resort to the balanced judgment because they have not yet indicated how good they can be. Frederic Morton's *The Schatten Affair* also gets into trouble when the plot begins to blot out the landscape, but that can be safely ignored; the book is high entertainment, all about a sophisticated American public relations man who becomes entangled with the neo-Gothic denizens of an estate when he tries to use them to organize a brilliant opening for his employer's grand hotel in Berlin. If Morton cannot handle comic Gothic as well as his superbly assured manner would indicate, he can be a splendid guide when his hero is frankly a traveler:

> I veered back into the Ku-damm area. There the mass consumption of night fun had started. Huge tourist buses sprayed people into the street. It makes me tired just to think of it. What followed was a hike through crazed and spastic brightness, a flicker of club portals, a twitching scream of invitations. At one point I came up flush against the Wall; it resembled a clumsy sideshow with its splashy warning signs and histrionic barbed wire. It looked like a stage prop which by accident was infinite and went around the world.

This cool elegance is just right for catching the seediness of the Schatten estate, the iron efficiency of the lady who runs the tourist bureau, the exciting and enervating quality of "the Western sideshow set in the Eastern Apocalypse." For those who like their fiction new, neat, elegant, and within civilized limits, Morton is a writer to read and watch.

The third tour is of Los Angeles, via Alison Lurie's *The Nowhere City*, at once the worst and best of these three tourist fictions. A young Harvard couple, Paul and Katharine Cattleman, come to Los Angeles so he can write a history of the Nutting Research and Development Corporation. What is so very wrong with this book is the characters—the Cattlemans, the R.&D. men, the fringies, starlets, and psychologists—their solemnity and the solemnity with which they are rendered. Listen to this talk:

> "I really like the way you paint. That big picture you're working on now. That's really interesting."
>
> "Which one?"
>
> He described it.

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"Aw, that's finished, I finished it last month; it's only still up there because I haven't done anything big since, I only blow a picture sometimes; you know, when I really feel like it. Here." Ceci stretched across the table to put a piece of toast on Paul's plate, skimming the butter with her right breast.

"Thanks."

She sat down again, but the breast did not make it back under her shirt, it remained outside, the full lower curve shiny with butter, the nipple pointing towards him.

"But what I dig most," (he used her idiom rather self-consciously), "is the big painting in the bedroom. On the ceiling. That's great."

Miss Lurie may know how awful this talk is, but her efforts to indicate this only make matters worse. That breast might be funny if it weren't for the reliance on the pornographer's phrase about its "full lower curve," and the parenthetical remark is only a gesture of authorial nervousness. But the book is nonetheless very good because Miss Lurie makes the plot work for her, and the tour is of a genuinely new place. There are some fine descriptions of the nonhuman landscape—the "smoggy pink sunset," the "dwarf palms illuminated by a red spotlight," the Forest Lawn billboard that says "Foreverness"—but it is the story that is fully revealing. Paul begins by loving Los Angeles, loving the way both landscape and citizen abolish time by living only in the present; Ceci, for him, is "great," "free." Katharine begins by hating it: the smog inflames her psychosomatic sinuses, the lack of seasons robs her of rhythms, the endless reliance on phony colors disgusts her. But gradually, as Paul turns from Ceci to Glory Green, a starlet of magnificent proportions and hair, and as Katharine is brought out of herself by Glory's psychiatrist husband, the two switch roles. At the end Katharine is wearing "tight yellow pants, with a smooth California tan and ash-blonde hair piled up on to her head like a mound of whipped cream," and Paul, Thel-like, flees from Los Angeles back to his vales of Har. It is shocking that one with such clarity and density of vision should so often write so badly, but it must be reiterated that an intelligence that can dramatize a sense of place in a story is rare, and that with a writer just beginning, whose second novel is so much better than her first, it is more than enough to make an admirer discard sober judgments and to set his hopes high indeed.

But such hopes are harder to come by (while remaining by no means unavailable) for writers who have as yet accomplished far more than has Alison Lurie and who, like Muriel Spark, seem to be working amongst the wreckage. A few years ago Ross Macdonald wrote a series of stunning psychodramas that still remain generally neglected: *The Galton Case, The Wycherly Woman, The Zebra-Striped Hearse.* But subsequent books fell into repetition of these successes,

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and now the latest, *Black Money,* sets out to do something different. It begins—and few writers create the sense of starting out as well as Ross Macdonald—with what seems a standard tale about the way underworld money corrupts the respectably wealthy, and proceeds to show how Lew Archer, Ross Macdonald's private detective, wrongly assumes, as if because he watched too much television, that when you find the underworld king you solve the case. Archer has the rug neatly pulled out from under him—the solved case leaves everything unsolved—but then, author and hero, sadly, have nothing left except shreds of a worn-out tangle and some not very clearly articulated anti-academic biases. Someone coming to Ross Macdonald first via *Black Money,* then, has every right to feel he is only another private eye novelist. But those who know this curiously modest and pretentious writer can still invoke his entire career and say he may be started on something new.

Almost certainly Iris Murdoch has much left to write but, as with Ross Macdonald, it is easier to say this when looking at her whole career than when reading her latest, *The Red and the Green.* It may well delight devotees but it is no book at all for those who have managed to remain thus far innocent of Miss Murdoch's wondrous ways. Here, for instance, is part of an early page:

> Her first husband was John Richard Dumay, from whom she had issue two children, Brian and Millicent. Of these Brian—it was always said, whether truly or not, as a result of a nervous breakdown—had become a convert to Catholicism when still a student at Trinity. The great beauty's second marriage, after the death of her first husband, had been to Arnold Chase-White, and the one offspring of his union had been Henry Chase-White, Andrew's father. Henry married Hilda Drumm, and Brian Dumay had married one Kathleen Kinnard, who was, in fact, a connection of Hilda's mother's family, and who had caused pain and scandal by forthwith adopting the religious faith of her husband. Millicent Dumay then married Kathleen's brother, Sir Arthur Kinnard, and the third sister, Heather Kinnard, married Christopher Bellman, Frances' father.

There is more, too. An innocent, new to Miss Murdoch, would have to conclude that this is all a joke, but experienced readers know this genealogy has got to be learned right away if the novel is to be read at all. Having done so they can also see that the "Andrew" and "Frances" mentioned here stand no chance, bowed as they are by the weight of all that family. They can be safely ignored. But the book does begin with them and so the innocent can only be annoyed when little is done with them. And so it goes. The innocent will see Millicent Dumay Kinnard as the central figure because so many men take up so many pages being attracted to her, but the experienced reader

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knows Iris Murdoch handles her enchanters badly and will concentrate instead on those enchanted, with whom no one is ever better. The best of these is Kathleen Kinnard Dumay's second husband, Barney. He moves, with the beautiful logic of a very Irish weakling, from faith to guilt to penance to would-be enchantment and Miss Murdoch is at her best revealing each tortured step of the way. But Barney is almost lost in the gaggle of relatives and Millicent's admirers, and one could not seriously fault an innocent who reported the book had nothing in it at all. As Miss Murdoch has come more and more to work hardest with characters who cannot act, she has been increasingly unable to generate any force because the characters who drive her complicated plots have ceased to interest her. She still has many strengths few other novelists have, the most important of which is her inability to see anything as being truly ordinary, so that one who is happy to have grown up in a world with Iris Murdoch in it can only wish that the next book not come so quickly, and that it be a novel she wants to write and not one she merely can write.

Brian Moore seems to suffer from the opposite defect: he does not write enough and ought to make it bigger. His fifth novel is a very pleasant read, but *The Emperor of Ice Cream* is really only a very good long short story with an extensive prologue. The story is about the coming to manhood of a young emperor of ice cream during a Nazi bombing raid on his home town of Belfast. Moore's prose, which has grown sparer recently, is a marvelous instrument for a careful accounting of the way disaster feels and looks when it hits familiar things; in the middle of this story is a first-rate account of a whole day spent, after nights of no sleep, preparing corpses for identification and burial. What keeps nagging is the simple thought that if Moore can do this well he can then do far better. The powerful inwardness of his first two novels has pretty well disappeared by now, and to take its place he has not as yet really found a subject that can make demands on all his very considerable talents. He is still telling stories that come easily to him, and so this latest book, if it offers no cause for commissioning a requiem, offers only enough for a genuine but modest celebration.

John Updike too seems badly in need of a new subject—Olinger, Pennsylvania has served him well and perhaps may again, for it is certainly the best small town in recent American literature, but at the moment Updike is only icy and confused about it. No review, however laudatory, has been able to pretend that *Of the Farm* is an interesting book to read, and it just manages to avoid falling into the class of the short but interminable. Joey Robinson, *The Centaur's* Peter Caldwell twenty years later, is a disagreeable New Yorker who returns with his second wife to visit his mother on the farm of his youth. Both mother and son are nasty to the wife, but the mother has some redeeming moments of insight and wit while Joey only broods,

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betrays his wife, remembers his betrayal of his first wife, and feels mighty guilty about it all. There is a long set piece about Renewal when Joey cuts the field, there are some shocking moments when mother or son are particularly rude, but the dominant sense is of brooding, distasteful wandering and a growing feeling that the book could gain a focus only with an open display of savagery that Updike does not want to admit he feels. He has written best when writing from the wells of his own nostalgia, but here he tries to make that nostalgia the subject of his book and seems only lost and angry with himself. The inconclusiveness of the ending—the mother has a small stroke, the others leave "and left the past apparently unrevised"—is not so much an honest estimate of how little can happen in a weekend as an apparent admission that Updike is not sure why he wrote the novel at all. But remember, people have been hoping all along that Updike would find something he could not handle flashily, and it is reasonable to say that all this disarray in a young writer of obviously great talent may only signal that loss of confidence in his power to do anything he felt like. Another sober judgment, another lowish requiem, but when the grounds for hope lie in a book's weaknesses, little more is possible.

For something closer to high mass we can begin with two ladies named Howard, one very English and the other very American. Both books reveal nothing so much as the danger of opposing the feminine sensibility on principle. The American, Maureen Howard, describes the adventures of a thirty-five-year-old spinster, Mary Agnes Keely, who leaves her mother and Connecticut factory home to Go Live in New York. After the American fashion, *Bridgeport Bus* is all done with a lurching overblown style:

> Will it surprise anyone to hear that I am the new copy writer for Wunda-Clutch, manufacturers of the miracle grip which makes the zipper obsolete? No. Seventeen years of virtue rewarded: a knowledge of the market and a fine literary background won me the prize. Wunda-Clutch is the end of talons and tape—no jamming up your sewing machine—the end of unreliable snaps, buttons. So banish unsightly zipper bulge says the complaisant matron to her tortured daughter—and always put toilet paper on a public seat. The hundreds of little Wunda bristles on one side of the fastening clutch at the woven miracle hooks on the other side—like lovers long parted, like babies at their mother's breasts. The famous burr-action—a rich world of possibilities for me to explore.

Such exuberance is obviouly likely to careen off into disaster, and there is a long play in the middle that is a terrible dud. But Mrs. Howard recovers with a set piece about the heroine's show biz cousin that is overwhelming in its moment-to-moment inventiveness, and even at the end, with the heroine, pregnant now, home again to

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see her mother and have her baby, the lady is still unexhausted:

> I did create a fuss, I'll grant that much, hollered and rolled my eyes, called convincingly upon their prominent saints in a moaning, rocking, reverent liturgy. The dresses—all right, if the colors ran in their machines downstairs and made the usual mess, I couldn't be less concerned about what I have on—in the nature of an unbleached muslin hospital sack with ties. Shoes with ties taken out, "So you won't 'trip,' Miss Keely."
>
> "Yeah, sister and my name's Fatty Arbuckle."
>
> "Please, Miss Keely!"
>
> "That's all right. I can't reach my feet any more."

The energy itself is admirable, but the focus is kept, too, on the triumphant disaster of Miss Keely's life, and so, despite all that could and much that does go wrong with *Bridgeport Bus,* Maureen Howard does redeem her style and thereby redeem the cliché of the tough-soft motherly virgin spinster—all very unlikely, but all quite true.

And if *that* seems hard to believe, what about a book like Elizabeth Jane Howard's *After Julius,* which begins with characters named Emma, Cressy, Esme, and Felix? which takes place at a weekend in an English country house where the cook announces the chickens won't be at their best unless the folks come to dinner immediately? which is all about "the shattering effects" on the lives of these ladies of their father and husband who died twenty years earlier while rescuing troops at Dunkirk? which is very up-to-date in its determinedly casual sprinkling of a few dirty words and in the occasional resemblance of its nice young poet to Lucky Jin? But, like *Bridgeport Bus, After Julius* has got to be read to be believed; if it is insistently like Elizabeth Bowen, Pamela Hansford Johnson, Elizabeth Taylor, and Iris Murdoch, it is nonetheless the best of its genre in some time. The book constantly shifts its point of view, often just to rework a scene from another angle, so it is very easy to groan at the beginning of finding out what Cressy thought about the scene we've just been through with Emma—but then, Miss Howard will invariably see something unanticipated, make some construction or emphasis on these very standard feelings that justifies not only those feelings but another look at all the others. Everything here has happened countless times in countless novels, but *After Julius* forces one to celebrate the possibilities of even the tiredest of fictional genres.

Even stranger is what happens in George P. Elliott's *In the World.* In its demeanor it is not different from his *Parktilden Village* and *David Knudsen,* novels which seemed to demonstrate that the flat heavy American style is even less valid than cool English intelligence. *In the World* is long, over two hundred thousand words. As befits Elliott's efforts to allow his characters all the room they need to make their decisions and to live with them, the book is in the usual

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sense plotless. It should have been a disaster, adequate reward for someone who really wants to be Tolstoi. But there is great strength in this novel, derived more from Thackeray, really, than from Tolstoi; Elliot is determined to make "the world" as resonant a metaphor as "Vanity Fair." Of course it does not work, for Elliott is far less interestingly baffled by his overriding idea than Thackeray was by his. But for at least half the book, despite the great wandering, Elliott keeps his focus on his hero, a professor of law who, among other things, must decide whether to continue teaching or become a federal judge. The author is fascinated by the prospect of dramatizing the possibilities that academe is as much "in the world" as the bench, and so he does what few writers of academic novels dare to: he puts one of his biggest scenes in the classroom. In a fine exchange, all too brief, between teacher and student, he brings his hero to his decision. The climactic speech is in itself less than brilliant but it shows how the classroom can rebuke the ideal of monosyllabic realism, how teachers can sometimes speak so students can sometimes listen, how a man can make a decision on the basis of such an exchange, how an asking mind is indeed "in the world."

But having slowly brought his book to such a point, Elliott seems to have then miscalculated. This decision, like that of his hero to leave his wife, like those of their children and friends which fill the book, must be lived, and Elliott never really decides in what arenas that living will take place. He can show that this intelligent man, if he continues to love his wife, will probably return to her, however ponderously and pompously. But that is hardly news, certainly less than enough of a place to end the book. He can insist that the hero's life is dictated in part by the decisions of his children: one leaves a disastrous marriage and "the world" for an Indian tribe, the other sets out with a hopeful young man. But the children are really only dramatizations of the central metaphor, and "the world" can finally be an interesting construction of Elliott's only if he returns their choices to their father and measures their impact on him. But the climax of the book in fact comes with the collapse of the elder daughter's marriage, and that event is simply not that important; we are left, thus, with the flat belief that a middle-aged liberal can neither fully accept nor fully reject "the world." Dreadful, that, and it looks as though either Elliott did not see how badly he was letting his book down or else he does not know what and where "the world" is beyond knowing it is where he lives. But the achievement is nonetheless impressive, especially given the perverse affection Elliott has for the flat style, and even if it would take real profundity of vision to push beyond the point Elliott has managed to reach, *In the World* is cause for solemn and rather amazed celebration.

But high mass must be said for Graham Greene. Fifteen years ago

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Greene seemed finished, awash in morbid religiosity and self-pity, and after *The End of the Affair,* moving to *The Living Room* and the theatre seemed as good a place to go as any to wind it all up. But then came *The Quiet American,* and, even better, *Our Man in Havana*; yet these were followed by *A Burnt Out Case,* a title which seemed to insist on being its own epitaph. Yet here is *The Comedians,* very much a Greene novel-entertainment and one of his very best books, to prove with crystal prose and a magnificent sense of detail that some authors can return even from the road to murky allegory. It is a mordant, often disagreeable and generally defeated book, but it all takes place in Haiti, the perfect place for such feelings to be expressive of a world. Beyond everything, Greene's three central characters are named Brown, Smith, and Jones—Brown, a man without country or home who tries to hold on to a hotel outside Port-au-Prince as the best he can do; Smith, who ran for president in 1948 on the vegetarian ticket in Wisconsin, dreamy, well-wishing, undefeated when his plans for a vegetarian center in Papa Doc Duvalier's new capital are wiped away in Haitian greed and corruption; Jones, vaguely an adventurer and world traveler, who survives both sudden success and sudden failure in financial quackery to go teach some Haitian rebels how to use guns he knows nothing about. Beyond everything, Greene beautifully takes his time showing us this country he apparently loves—the story is kept in the foreground and only gradually do we see how fully we are learning of Papa Doc and his police, the Tontons Macoute, of the roadblocks and the flights to foreign embassies, of the unfathomable financial and political dealing that Greene knows better than to try to understand (thereby showing the falsity of a well received Prix Goncourt novel of the quarter, Georges Conchon's *The Savage State,* which finally is smug about its horror in an African country because it imagines there is nothing not understood). Here, for instance, Brown describes Smith's typical troubles in Haiti:

> Mr. Smith has been in the republic a week now. He had seen the kidnapping of Doctor Philipot's body; I had driven him through the worst of shanty-town. That morning he had insisted against my advice in going to the Post-Office himself to buy stamps. I had lost him momentarily in the crowd, and when I found him again he had not been able to approach a foot towards the *guichet.* Two one-armed men and three one-legged men hemmed him round. Two were trying to sell him dirty old envelopes containing out-of-date Haitian postage-stamps: the others were more frankly begging. A man without legs at all had installed himself between his knees and removed his shoe-laces preparatory to cleaning his shoes. Others seeing a crowd collected were fighting to join it.

What makes this kind of thing so good and so awful is precisely the

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way Greene knows he can view this well only from the outside and knows, too, how to avoid the feeling of deliberate slumming that a self-conscious set piece would inevitably help create.

But best of all he knows how to do something perhaps only he could have done: he can tell a real story, fully plotted and plotted to reveal, with a powerless, defeated, vaguely inactive man as narrator and hero. He can do this in part simply because he knows how to handwork a plot so it is not an object of self-regard. But he can do it also because he can dramatize inaction as a kind of action, because at critical moments *not* doing is a matter of choice and temperament as well as the result of powerlessness. Brown first sees Smith as being able to act, however irrelevantly, because he is naive and eager to help; then he sees his mistress, the daughter of a Nazi and the wife of an ambassador, refuse to give up her integrity to the weight of the past; finally, he watches Jones stumble into guerilla work because he is homeless, just as he sees himself unable to act because he is in the same condition. Each of these people seen is an event in the story, each happens because the one before it happened, and Brown can thus be brought to see, clearly and morosely but without self-pity, that in that shabby land of terror all the other apparently uncommitted comedians can live with or break loose from the needs of their pasts to face and respond to the terror. At the end:

> I saw myself on a great plain, walking and walking on the interminable flats. Once I might have taken a different direction, but it was too late now. When I was a boy the Fathers of the Visitation had told me that one test of a belief was this: that a man was ready to die for it. So Doctor Magiot thought too, but for what belief did Jones die?

So Brown is left, the only comedian finally, still trying to discover the causes of his own inaction and of the eventual decisiveness of others. He chants the requiem, but so beautifully, so carefully, so filled with sympathy and pathos for all he is and all he does not understand, that the requiem is transformed into a mass as well, celebrating the unseen hosts.

We too are left, knowing this fine book has happened, not knowing how it happened, enchanted for a moment at the resources of an aging novelist and the capacity of life to meet his needs, at last.

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PAUL LEVINE

Reality and Fiction

GIVEN THE OUTRAGEOUS NATURE OF CONTEMPORARY REALITY, it was perhaps inevitable that the artistic quest for an appropriate mode would lead to the writing of a "nonfiction novel." But who would have predicted that its creator and publicist would be Truman Capote? Capote, after all, made his reputation as a writer of adolescent fantasies, comic daydreams like *The Grass Harp* or *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and surreal nightmares like *Other Voices, Other Rooms.* This alternation between daylight and moonlight inevitably led Capote toward the creation of what he called "a hybrid form." "I wrote," Capote said recently, "what I called a short nonfiction novel, *The Muses Are Heard.* About the people going to Russia. And then I got this idea of doing a really serious big work—it would be precisely like a novel, with a single difference: every word of it would be true from beginning to end. I called this, in my mind, a nonfiction novel."

The notion of using actual occurrences in a work of fiction is hardly revolutionary. Works as different in spirit as Joyce's *Ulysses* and Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* relied heavily on newspaper accounts and public records. Moreover, writers like Isak Dinesen and Ernest Hemingway sought serious alternatives to fiction which would depict a similar quality of inner reality. As Hemingway wrote in the Preface to *Green Hills of Africa,* "Unlike many novels, none of the characters or incidents in this book is imaginary. . . . The writer has attempted to write an absolutely true book to see whether the shape of a country and the pattern of a month's action can, if truly presented, compete with a work of the imagination."

Hemingway's Preface could stand as an introduction to Capote's new "nonfiction novel," *In Cold Blood.*[1] This is a painstakingly researched account of the grotesque and gratuitous murder of a prosperous Kansas family by two intelligent, personable, and demented ex-convicts who were complete strangers to their victims. With consummate reportorial skill and a novelist's eye for shape and detail, Capote traces the course of events from the day the Clutter family is butchered to the night, some six years later, when the killers are hanged. As an artistic job of reporting in depth, *In Cold Blood* is certainly first-rate; as the progenitor of a new species of novel, its credentials are somewhat more dubious. Capote himself suggested this when he remarked some years ago:

> Actually, I don't consider the style of this book, *The Muses Are*

[1] IN COLD BLOOD, by *Truman Capote.* Random House. $5.95.

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Heard, as markedly different from my fictional style. Perhaps the content, the fact that it is about real events, makes it seem so. After all, *Muses* is straight reporting, and in reporting one is occupied with literalness and surfaces, with implication without comment—one can't achieve immediate depths the way one may in fiction. However, one of the reasons I've wanted to do reportage was to prove that I could apply my style to the realities of journalism. But I believe my fictional method is equally detached—emotionality makes me lose writing control: I have to exhaust the emotion before I feel clinical enough to analyze and project it, and as far as I'm concerned that's one of the laws of achieving true technique. If my fiction seems more personal it is because it depends on the artist's most personal and revealing area: his imagination.

But if *In Cold Blood* is ever accepted as a new form of novel I suspect it will be because the material itself seems to come straight out of the world of contemporary fiction. It presents, in fact, the identical situation depicted by Flannery O'Connor a decade ago in her remarkable story, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find." Like Miss O'Connor, Capote dramatizes the confrontation between ordinary people and extreme experience. The victims are a God-fearing family which epitomizes the best in the conventional ideals of middle class, Middle Western America; the criminals, representing all that is brilliantly, poisonously sick in contemporary culture, come as black angelic avengers to violate the insularity of this comfortably old-fashioned world. The situation is a paradigm for contemporary literature, from Bellow's *The Victim* through Genet's *The Balcony* to the *avant garde* clashes between hip and square. As one local resident remarks: "Feeling wouldn't run half as high if this had happened to anyone *except* the Clutters. Anyone *less* admired. Prosperous. Secure. But that family represented everything people hereabouts really value and respect, and that such a thing could happen to them—well, it's like being told there is no God. It makes life seem pointless. I don't think people are so much frightened as they are deeply depressed."

The point of the book would seem to be almost existential: the terrible confrontation between the illusions by which we invest our lives with order, meaning, and security as a defense against reality, and the prowling reality which is ever ready to strip us of our defenses and reveal its true violent and incomprehensible nature. Even the actual killer, Perry Smith, is an unwitting and pathetic victim of his own illusions, dreaming of paradise, "A real place. Like out of a movie," and remarking of his first victim, "I didn't want to harm the man. I thought he was a very nice gentleman. Soft-spoken. I thought so right up to the moment I cut his throat." After hearing the murderers' confessions, the detective who broke the case begins to comprehend the real ambiguities of this terrible situation:

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> But the confessions, though they answered questions of how and why, failed to satisfy his sense of meaningful design. The crime was a psychological accident, virtually an impersonal act; the victims might as well have been killed by lightning. Except for one thing: they had experienced prolonged terror, they had suffered. And Dewey could not forget their sufferings. Nonetheless, he found it possible to look at the man beside him without anger—with, rather, a measure of sympathy—for Perry Smith's life had been no bed of roses but pitiful, an ugly and lonely progress toward one mirage and then another.

For the townspeople, too, the murders become an inscrutable part of the universe with which they must ultimately come to terms. "I'd been too dazed, too numb, to feel the full viciousness of it," one neighbor remarked. "The suffering. The horror. They were dead. A whole family. Gentle, kindly people I knew—*murdered*. You had to believe it, because it was really true."

Time after time, the reader, like the characters, is brought back to reality and the terrible facts are rehearsed again as if they might yield a new meaning. The confrontation with extreme experience becomes ours as much as theirs. True awareness begins with the realization that the characters in this drama are not merely real people but, more significantly, human beings. When, at the end of the book, the tables are turned and the murderers become themselves victims of a cold-blooded execution, we too are led to reexamine the myths we have set up to block out their real humanity. And after such knowledge, what forgiveness?

Though *In Cold Blood* would seem to take the neorealistic novel as far as it could go, the book's meaning lies closer to the moral texture of more conventional fiction. Though it would seem to be based on the theory that if the writer cannot beat reality then he had better join it, *In Cold Blood* is actually cut from the same cloth as Capote's nightmarish fantasies, particularly "Miriam" and "A Tree of Night." Certainly, Perry Smith, the most fully drawn and sensitively conceived character in the book, resembles the inhabitants of Capote's fictive world:

> Sitting, he had seemed a more than normal sized man, a powerful man. . . . But some sections of him were not in proportion to others. His tiny feet, encased in short black boots with steel buckles, would have neatly fitted into a delicate lady's dancing slippers; when he stood up he was no taller than a twelve-year-old child, and suddenly looked, strutting on stunted legs that seemed grotesquely inadequate to the grown-up bulk they supported, not like a well-built truck driver but like a retired jockey, overblown and muscle-bound.

It is the child in the man that Capote stresses. Romantic and neu-

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rotic, with pretentions to learning and a trunkful of exotic maps, Perry is a demonic Miss Bobbit or Holly Golightly, indulging in fantasies of faraway places or fame as a tap-dancer. As we penetrate to the heart of Perry's sense of reality we come perilously close to the world of artistic imagination. Here is Perry in the months before his execution:

> All summer Perry undulated between half-awake stupors and sickly, sweat-drenched sleep. Voices roared through his head; one voice persistently asked him, "Where is Jesus? Where?" And once he woke up shouting, "The bird is Jesus! The bird is Jesus!" His favorite old theatrical fantasy, the one in which he thought of himself as "Perry O'Parsons, The One-Man Symphony," returned in the guise of a recurrent dream. The dream's geographical center was a Las Vegas night club where, wearing a white top hat and a white tuxedo, he strutted about a spotlighted stage playing in turn a harmonica, a guitar, a banjo, drums, sang "You Are My Sunshine," and tap-danced up a short flight of gold-painted prop steps; at the top, standing on a platform, he took a bow. There was no applause, none, and yet thousands of patrons packed the vast and gaudy room —a strange audience, mostly men and mostly Negroes. Staring at them, the perspiring entertainer at last understood their silence, for suddenly he knew that these were phantoms, the ghosts of the legally annihilated, the hanged, the gassed, the electrocuted—and in the same instant he realized that he was there to join them, that the gold-painted steps had led to a scaffold, that the platform on which he stood was opening beneath him. His top hat tumbled; urinating, defecating, Perry O'Parsons entered eternity.

If Perry Smith's dream is as haunting as anything in recent fiction, it is still to fiction that we immediately relate it. Though some may see in Capote's work more intimations of the death of the novel, it seems to me rather to confirm and affirm the accuracy of the modern fictive vision. In his best moments, Capote manages to liberate his images from the events which created them and in those moments *In Cold Blood* seems literally too good to be true.

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ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS

The Intricate Argentine

COMING TO US FROM A LONG WAYS OFF, arriving gradually and amid reverberations, cased in the portentous carapace of an enigmatic manner, Jorge Luis Borges seems now to be very much on the scene. He has arrived trailing clouds of critical commentary, a first volume of which is now to hand. It is *Borges the Labyrinth Maker,* by Ana María Barrenechea, who is Director of the Institute of Spanish Philology and Literature at Buenos Aires.[1] The book bears a nice and characteristically ambiguous recommendation from its subject. "Professor Barrenechea's book," says Señor Borges, "has taught me many things about myself." Does he mean that old things have been unearthed from where they previously lay fruitfully hidden in the authorial unconscious, or, more ironically, that original notions of the critic's own fashioning have been gratuitously imputed to him? I am not sure that his gratitude should be much more effusive in the one event than in the other. But even a judgment of what he means to say about Professor Barrenechea's book is subject to complications from publishing history. Professor Barrenechea's original volume, *La expresión de la irrealidad en la obra de Jorge Luis Borges,* was published in Mexico in 1957; it has since been expanded, according to an explanatory note, to include new materials by the author, as well as some by Señor Borges himself. For the present edition it was "edited and translated" by Mr. Robert Lima, who has added an original signed appendix of his own. Who is responsible for what in the rest of this venture remains dark. It will not even serve for an eager student to compare the Mexican edition of the book with the NYU edition, since any one of at least three persons may have had a hand in the changes. As it stands, the book is very adequately unified, both tonally and intellectually—it's not a question of any observed deficiencies. The point is simply that Señor Borges speaks on his work with one sort of authority, Professor Barrenechea and Mr. Lima with another, and when Señor Borges learns something about himself, one would like to know who he's learning it from. It is less important than characteristic that the first book in English purporting to "explain" Borges should itself be a composite, palimpsest production, as intricate in its own way as some of the labyrinths it sets out to explain. Señor Borges would say, with sardonic indeterminacy:—This also may have been foreseen.

In several respects, the volume at hand is less than satisfying as an

[1] BORGES THE LABYRINTH MAKER, by *Ana María Barrenechea.* Ed. and trans. by Robert Lima. New York University Press. $5.00 cloth, $1.95 paper.

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introduction to the work of Borges.[2] In many details its perspective is altogether too intimate to suit the needs of the Anglo-Saxon reader, who ought, of course, to have at his fingertips the major and minor figures of Spanish, South American, and Central American literature and history—Rafael Cansinos Asséns, (?) Huidobro (probably Luis but perhaps Vincente), Macedonio Fernandez, and Narciso Laprida, for example—but who might be more generously assisted if the critique took for granted a little less of what it is trying to explain. A more baffling difficulty afflicting the study is its frequent simplicity; it is (in one of Borges' favorite paradoxical images) a labyrinth in the form of a straight line. Professor Barrenechea's critical method is to reconstruct the "world" of Borges by identifying in detail its components. These are nouns, proper and common, concrete and abstract; ideas, of heterogeneous provenance; images, metaphors, landscapes, adjectives, verbs, scraps of erudition—and, I suppose, on down to sentence structure and punctuation, about which, perhaps because in Borges they are not in any way distinctive, Professor Barrenechea happily does not say much. But with a maker of labyrinths, especially such paradoxical ones as those of Borges, the materials of the building count for very little and its patterning for a great deal. Over and over, Professor Barrenechea reminds one of that little man memorialized by Bert Brecht in an epigram somewhere, who carried a brick around with him to show people what his house looked like. I quote pretty much at random:

> *Suspect, guess,* and *conjecture* describe the task of the man who tries to decipher the symbols proferred by the planet. *Secret, obscure,* and *dark,* besides *central, blind, elemental, fundamental, irresistible,* and *profound* suggest an intimate message, an undeniable destiny, an essential aspect that is impossible to elude (p. 70).

This is curious criticism indeed. Why aren't *strive, divine,* and *intuit* included in the first list (they are the first words I find Borges using to describe an effort at deciphering symbols)? Is there some reason why *incessant, mysterious,* and *arcane* are omitted from the second list? And what does it mean, in the end, when we say three verbs may be used to describe an action which is also described by a fourth? or that seven adjectives may serve to suggest what is also suggested by four others? There is nothing peculiar to Borges about these constel-

[2] Compact bibliography of Borges in translation: *Labyrinths* (New Directions, 1962) contains translations from *El Aleph, El jardín de los senderos que se bifurcan, Ficciones* (these last two collections are sometimes incorporated under the second title), and *El hacedor,* plus an assortment of essays and a useful bibliography. *Dreamtigers* (University of Texas, 1964) is *El hacedor* complete, both prose and poetry. The *Historia universal de la infamia* and the *Historia de la eternidad* have been translated into French and appear in the paperback collection "Le Monde en 10/18"; the *Obras completas* are being issued by Emecé Editores, Buenos Aires.

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lations of meaning; criticism of this sort could be turned out in profusion without any specific text at all, merely by studying a good dictionary of synonyms, or Roget's *Thesaurus*.

It is common knowledge that much interesting work has been done on recurrent word-clusters in various authors of whom Shakespeare, Yeats, and Dickens come most immediately to mind. The aim is to show, by bringing out distinctive usages and special, characteristic combinations, the associative patternings of the writer's imaginative vision. But this is very different from a haphazard listing of some of the words an author uses to describe a particular sort of experience. "White" and "cold" are repeatedly used by Dostoevsky to describe snow; though undeniable, the fact doesn't move us very far toward an understanding of Dostoevsky's mind or art. The method, if that word applies, is particularly inappropriate to a writer of labyrinths, since it involves categorically equating appearances in one labyrinth with those in another—and in artful labyrinths the same appearance should mean the same thing twice only when it will mislead by doing so.

But if its practical criticism often reminds one of a car with a slipping clutch, Professor Barrenechea's book opens up some interesting perspectives with its analysis of Borges' philosophical position. This posture apparently consists of two extreme positions, in violent conflict with one another; the crux can be driven into a proverbial nutshell:

> Perhaps the most important of Borges' concerns is the conviction that the world is a chaos impossible to reduce to any human law [strictly speaking, the adjective "human" is excessive in this sentence]. At the same time that he so vividly experiences the madness of the universe, he realizes that as a man he cannot avoid searching for some meaning in it (p. 50).

In fact, it is just because man feels anguish in the face of total disorder that he knows it is alien to a principle of order in his mind—seen through green glasses, grass would look perfectly white, and a disordered vision could recognize no disorder. Hence a double bind, an interlocking push-pull of paradox: the fact of disorder depends on an image of order, while the image of order depends on the anguish of disorder. The labyrinths of Borges are intricate structures for reaching various facets of this impasse; mental adventures, which are doomed to expose their own absurdity; Rube Goldberg feedback contraptions cleverly constructed to cut the ground out from under their own feet. The dust-jacket for *Borges the Labyrinth Maker* is, predictably, a labyrinth; but the design has gone unexpectedly beyond its illustrative intent, to become a critique. For it is a labyrinth without a solution. Starting from the center it's impossible to get out, starting from the outside it's impossible to get in. Though it looks like a single circular pattern, the "labyrinth" is really five separate

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compartments with no connections between them.—This also may have been foreseen.

An instance is in order. Tlön (in the story-essay "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius") is a new cosmos, for the inhabitants of which objects have ceased to exist, nouns are no longer part of the language, and existence is describable only as a series of psychological states. The natives of Tlön are metaphysicians without a physics; hence their intellectual interests lie not at all in the verisimilitude (accuracy) of their ideas, but only in their symmetry and elegance, since all speculations are equally private and personal. Their language allows them to combine freely objects and impressions of the most diverse character—something heard, something seen, something felt, for example. A single word might combine the sensation of watching the sun rise while a green bird sings nearby and cold water flows over one's chest. There are famous poems, in Tlön, made up of one enormous word, a super-ideogram, as it were; on the other hand, there are no sciences, not even reasoning. Language is simply an infinite meaningless game of combinations and associations. Not only physical nature but history becomes plastic under the free play of the Tlön imagination; when a single object is lost in Tlön, two or more will often be found; the past can be modified by the discovery of artifacts *intended* to verify specific theories.

The progress of this essay-story consists of Tlön's expansion in men's minds through a series of widely spaced and apparently accidental revelations. First it is a brief and superficial article in Volume XLVI of a single copy of a maverick reprint of the 1902 *Encyclopedia Britannica;* then it is a single copy of Volume XI of the *First Encyclopedia of Tlön* (Hlaer to Jangr); then it is a full set of that encyclopedia in forty volumes; at last it is revealed as an immense hoax perpetrated over several centuries by an anonymous conspiracy and revitalized in mid-nineteenth-century by an eccentric American millionaire. But though it is "now" known to be a fraud, the dominion of Tlön over men's minds continues to advance. Though false, it is orderly; its order is decipherable, and in the end more congenial (as man-made and so potentially comprehensible) than the heartless enigma of God's universe. The narrator looks forward to a *Second Encyclopedia of Tlön* in a century or so, when the whole familiar cosmos will have been swallowed up in the predatory Tlön network of imagination.

The story of Tlön is exemplary; it proposes that since men can make no sense of the real world, even a hoax world will gain irresistible ascendancy over them. The theme of one order merging imperceptibly into, or emerging imperceptibly from, violations of another order is frequent enough in Borges. But interesting things happen to a story about order and disorder when it contains as much unexplained disorder as this one. The *First Encyclopedia of Tlön* is

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said to be written in English; English can't be written without nouns, nor can a world-view which dispenses with nouns be presented in English. The acts of preparing and printing an encyclopedia are incompatible with the uncompromising idealism attributed to the inhabitants of Tlön. The story asserts that objects have been found in South America made of a heavy metal which is "not of this world"; yet Tlön-Uqbar is at one point a country in Central Asia, at another point the invention of conspirators dating back to the 17th century. Is Tlön another planet entirely, subject to different laws of time and space? That a metal cone small enough to be held in the palm of one's hand should be so heavy a man can barely lift it suggests extraterrestrial origins; but how then did the Encyclopedia of Tlön come to be written in English? The text says that objects from Tlön were artificially disseminated in different parts of the globe in the course of a purely human plot; a footnote calls attention to the fact that some of the objects so disseminated were of materials which do not occur on the earth. This gesture of the story in calling attention to its own unresolved contradiction appears to be saying: this is a true story, and one guarantee of its authenticity is that its author hasn't tried to rationalize or order it—when an inexplicable fact occurs, he simply records it and its own puzzlement over it. But in this way the story about one order-of-reality (the world) intruded on by another (Tlön) becomes a third order-of-reality (the story) which may be intruded on by a fourth (the author's footnote)—and so on, *ad infinitum*. A mere labyrinth, like any other game, presupposes finite rules; Borges, by continually fracturing the rules of his own game, draws it out to infinity, futility, and inevitable defeat.

The mournful poetry of mind defeated by its own intricacies and nuances takes the place, in Borges' little sketches, of "rendering" in its usual literary sense. Few characters, little inwardness, little conflict, little development, only the sparse outlines of a bleak landscape and a crucifix of syllogisms on which the mind is sacrificed. Men wander endlessly through the shadowy corridors of a library as long as the cosmos itself, seeking salvation along endless shelves of outwardly identical books whose contents seem to have been typed by those twenty random monkeys who will, sooner or later, by pure chance, write the complete works of Shakespeare—but who, so far, have produced merely interminable streams of gibberish shot through with an occasional half-lucid phrase. For Funes the memorious there are no categories at all, not even of number, only multitudinous, indelible particulars; his new system of numbering assigns arbitrary words to each number, so that 17,591 might be designated *sulphur*, 17,592 *Olimar*, and 17,593 *Luis Melian Lafinur*. An incredible athletic feat of memory thus puts him effectually in the position of an idiot—for whom, too, every individual phenomenon is unique. Pierre Menard undertakes, in full 20th century, to rewrite certain

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chapters of *Don Quixote*—not to transpose or adapt them, but, after due spiritual preparation, to write the book again in identical words, which, however, would take on from the new circumstances wholly new overtones. What was crude and naive in Cervantes will be infinitely rich and ambiguous in Menard, though the mere words are identical; associations and philosophical complexities only partly under the author's control will overlay and undermine the gross patterns; by subtleties so elusive that they verge imperceptibly upon accident, Menard will become a new and surpassingly perverse sort of artist. The lottery in Babylon and the cult of the Phoenix are vast logical-illogical structures of practice and belief which merge at the edges gradually into the laws of chance, the random combination and recombination of arbitrary events. Reality multiplies indefinitely, is subdivided infinitely, spawns multiple cross-categories, cleaves into innumerable chips and splinters. Order becomes indistinguishable from disorder when specialized forms of disorder and aberration become principles of competing order in the form of sects, schisms, cults, and varieties of fixation or mania. Brief and scattered as they are, Borges' little sketches of intricate brain-maggotry constitute exercises of delay and postponement against a corrosive nihilism to which, in the end, despite the author's apparent intention, but with his more or less tacit connivance, they inevitably lead.

The working of intricate erudition which conducts the mind through elaborate channels to its own defeat is familiar enough in the Western tradition—one need mention only *A Tale of a Tub, Bouvard et Pécuchet, The Castle, Pale Fire.* The special action of these books is the gradual emergence, from behind technical enigmas, of a human situation. Borges is rather meager in these indications, more meager even than Kafka, and not always free from overtones of artifice. His puzzler after elusive and never-conclusive evidence is familiar enough; readers will have seen many such avatars of the compulsive scholar. His lucubrations lead this figure to a doubt of his personal identity or that of his creator—a familiar doubt, and not very generously rendered by Borges, who tends to turn it off with a quizzical shrug rather than a metaphysical shudder. The creator of these many little fantastic sketches hardly ever gives himself space to develop those insights which lie outside labyrinths, which one breaks through labyrinths to reach, and of which, for the writer of fiction, labyrinths are mere paradigms. The games are not always played within the two-dimensional space conventional to labyrinths; but in their handling of the third dimension, in their evocation of human depth, they seem least consistently controlled.

With another author, it might be a scarcely-concealed form of slander to say a major reward of reading him is bibliographical; with Borges the case is not so clear. He commands, in his own sphere, a range of curious lore—myth, fable, superstition, exotic

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fact—as wide as those of Robert Burton or Sir Thomas Browne; he is detailed, unpredictable, and beautifully specific. He has read the other volumes of DeQuincey, the commonplace book of Southey, H. G. Wells, *Peter Wilkins,* Miklosich on the Balkan dialects, and the Rosicrucian treaties of Johannes Valentinus Andreae. Some of his best effects come from rubbing together books of the popular tradition with those of an esoteric tonality, from mingling Scandinavian with rabbinical names, Basque with Urdu flavors. The library, the card-catalogues, and the topical bibliographies are for him, as it were, so many musical instruments from which he draws symphonic tones. There is an interest in the virtuosity displayed, an interest too in running down the books uncovered and tracing out the often-subtle blending of Borges' intent with that of the authors. But in fictional terms, does this amount to enough of an interest, or the right kind of interest? If I don't have an assured answer to this question, it seems nonetheless evidently the question to ask. Quirks of character and elements of "human interest" in the Dickensian sense are evidently played out as foci of interest in contemporary fiction; so are political action and old-fashioned love. The hard surface and dry concision of Borges provide a fine façade for something to develop behind; but if instead of developing it diffuses, a reader may well be left with the sense of dry husks. The epilogue to *El hacedor* recites the following parable:

> A man proposes to himself the task of portraying the world. Through the years he peoples a space with images of provinces, kingdoms, mountains, bays, ships, islands, fish, houses, weapons, stars, horses, and people. Shortly before dying, he discovers that this patient labyrinth of lines traces the image of his face.

Perhaps Mallarmé meant something like this when he spoke of eternity changing the poet into himself. But if the image which emerges is one of splinters and contrivance? It is always possible that Eternity may be asked to do too much of the constructive work of literary composition.

Discussions of Borges tend, perhaps naturally, to focus on his logical labyrinths—models, whether in fiction or essay form (and with striking frequency in a mixture of both) which develop an intricate pattern. But a good deal of his work has taken other forms. *The Universal History of Infamy,* for instance, which rings so fascinatingly in the ears of one who first looks into Borges, turns out to be a series of sketches of quite parochial villains—highwaymen, bully-boys, impostors, and criminals. These are perfectly respectable, but not particularly intricate Newgate-Calendar narrations, which could adorn without ennobling a television series by Alfred Hitchcock. The companion *History of Eternity* loses a good deal of its fascination when it turns out to be a brief account of some men's ideas of eternity.

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These studies take on a further improvised look when they are eked out with miscellaneous short essays, translations, and afterthought commentary. As for the considerable corpus of Borges' poetry, to comment on it is outside my competence, but a good deal of it is evidently devoid of those qualities which have aroused interest in his labyrinths. The argument here is not that these lesser undertakings of Borges in any way discredit him; but it may help toward a perspective to know that the texts which put Borges before us as a metaphysical wrestler constitute only a portion of his work; and that anyone who has found his translated work deficient in certain forms of basic unity can look for that unity a good deal further without being led toward it.

Still, in its very anti-architectural qualities—in its vertical and horizontal mobility, its short span, intense patterning, and lyric fascination with self-destruction—Borges' work may fairly represent our age as it is. From a nightmare, a picture, or a forgotten book, I recall an immense flat desert crowded with naked staircases, growing like mechanical plants to various heights, but all carrying at their upper end a skeleton doorway, after which they end in an abrupt vertical. Machines which one would climb only in order to fall, they offer mutely a swift, self-service execution. Borges' best inventions have this quality of arranged, impersonal efficiency; they are infernal little machines.

WILLIAM DICKEY

The Thing Itself

> There are words that mean nothing
> But there is something to mean.
> Not a declaration which is truth
> But a thing
> Which is.
>
> George Oppen, *This in Which*

READING THROUGH THESE NEW BOOKS, almost all of American poetry, it has seemed to me that each does one of two things: it puts its primary faith either in things or in the relationships between things. The first attitude assumes that when a thing has been seen or felt vividly enough, and when that vividness has been conveyed, the reader knows what the meaning of the thing is. The second attitude is not satisfied with seeing the thing in this brilliant isolation. It wants to know how and where the thing fits other things; it assumes that what a thing is

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used for, how it is used in relation to other things, is an essential part of what it is.

Of these two attitudes, the second, which is social, is the less strongly represented in these books of poems. Perhaps this is nothing to wonder at: in an intellectual climate that increasingly emphasizes qualities of the absurd and the accidental, relationships of almost any kind may easily come to seem suspect, and the gap between East and West, or God and man, may with equal validity be felt between adjective and noun. Even when the writer stubbornly tries to assert that relationship is truth and is what he wants to discuss, the ground may be eroding under him. When relationships are not generally talked about they become harder to talk about, the language one may use to discuss them less common and more uncertain. Such an uncertainty seems to me to have affected the work of several of the poets mentioned here.

In their sense of the relative force of things or force of relationships, the poets I am discussing seem to me to fall into four rough groups.[1] There are, first of all, those writers who accept a traditional sense of the ways in which things are supposed to appear in poems, and who suppose that there is a generally serviceable and agreed-upon mode of poetic discourse. Second, there are those poets whose devotion is directed firmly toward the things themselves, and for whom relationship is at most implied. Third, there are several poets who seem uncertain about the direction in which they want to go; poets who introduce relationship as an important part of their work, but who seem unconvinced by what it is they are doing. Finally, there are those poets who are seeking a viable sense of relationship, but one which cannot properly be called traditional. There is not much agreement among these last poets as to the form such a sense of relationship might take. Their decisions are personal, rather than those of a shared ethic or aesthetic. But they do share a common assumption that patterns of relationship can be of serious importance.

Of the three poets whom I would call traditional, Robert Francis is the most representative of the type, Donald Davie the most energetic, Paul Ramsey the most lyric, and also (though not, as far as I know, by cause and effect) the most unclear.

[1] COME OUT INTO THE SUN: POEMS NEW AND SELECTED, by *Robert Francis*. Univ. of Massachusetts Press. $5.00. EVENTS AND WISDOMS, by *Donald Davie*. Wesleyan Univ. Press. $4.00 and $1.85. IN AN ORDINARY PLACE, by *Paul Ramsey*. Southern Poetry Review Press. $1.25. PLAIN SONG, by *Jim Harrison*. W. W. Norton. $4.50 and $1.95. THIS IN WHICH, by *George Oppen*. New Directions. $3.50 and $1.75. TESTIMONY: THE UNITED STATES (1885-1890), RECITATIVE, by *Charles Reznikoff*. New Directions. $3.75 and $1.95. LOVE MAKES THE AIR LIGHT, by *Raymond Roseliep*. W. W. Norton. $4.50 and $1.95. VIEWS FROM A FERRIS WHEEL, by *Robert Wallace*. E. P. Dutton. $3.50. THE PURITAN CARPENTER, by *Julia Randall*. Univ. of North Carolina Press. $3.75 and $1.85. DEPENDENCIES, by *Lisel Mueller*. Univ. of North Carolina Press. $3.75 and $1.85. QUESTIONS OF TRAVEL, by *Elizabeth Bishop*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $3.95. SELECTED POEMS, by *Louis Simpson*. Harcourt, Brace & World. $4.95. BUCKDANCER'S CHOICE, by *James Dickey*. Wesleyan Univ. Press. $4.00 and $1.85.

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The character of Francis' poetry shows up, I think, very clearly in a poem called "Watching Gymnasts":

> How flower-light they toss themselves, how light
> They toss and fall
> And flower-light, precise, and arabesque
> Let their praise be.

This is a consciously literary language, and one in which relationship clearly predominates. One has very little sense of actual gymnasts, of muscular sweating physical things, in Francis' poems. But one does have a sense of what the gymnasts can be compared to, in order to make them poetic. They can be praised, praise being an accepted poetic genre, and they can be praised in terms of images which elevate them and make them less particular.

The ability an accepted form or conventionalized voice usually has is to keep doing one thing more and more tightly and economically, and it is worth noting that Francis is really at his best in his infrequent epigrams. The disability of the accepted form or conventionalized voice is that it cannot admit a subject not previously mentioned, and there are really, in Francis' poems, no subjects we have not encountered, in very nearly the same guise, before. Francis says of himself "I am a poet, minor. Or I try." The deprecation itself establishes the importance of a particular kind of relationship and comparison: the existence of minor poets presupposes the possibility of major poets; there has to be a golden age for the silver age to feel it has descended from.

In Donald Davie's work, the deprecation which is personal in Francis seems to become national: Davie is one of the contemporary English poets whose vision is that of the momentary, the trivial, the second-rate. If the nature of an object is going to be very largely determined by an easily expectable relationship, there may not seem to be too much point in looking at the object in great detail. And Davie does not in fact often look very hard:

> The crossing of the Piave! In what year
> How many times, and by whose army, going
> In which direction—none of this was clear;
> With a sinking heart I felt it was not worth knowing.
>
> A necropolis and a stand of cypress came
> Predictably next, and all of it I knew
> Was a peeling village with the curious name,
> Victory, and fast traffic passing through.

Davie's is much less a poetry of discovery than it is one of recognition. The direction of its figurative language is toward reduction, toward the smaller object. Thus, when Davie considers the landscape outside Cumae, we find him saying

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And I saw all stone as a weak concoction of powder,
The golden skin of the columns
Cemented as limply as a Rizla paper.

Where particularity comes in, it is in the diminishing comparison. A cigarette paper, being more exact in itself, dominates the columns. But as in any pattern in which the lesser object is to dominate the greater, nothing to dominate something, it is probably the erasure of detail, rather than its presence, of which we will be most aware.

Paul Ramsey takes the question of relationship even farther, and indeed to a point where I find it difficult to follow. I don't know how many years it is now since I first saw the following poem, "Art." But I didn't then and I don't now understand it:

Dark is its begetting. Art is act
Betrayed by passion or by artifact
Till images encounter their repose.
The mind must learn to suffer what it knows.

In such a poem as this, and in passages from certain other of Ramsey's poems, I wonder if relationship and convention have not taken over to such an extent as to make the object wholly plastic: we see things involved in a relationship that we expect to see, and only later does it occur to us to ask whether they were dogs or mantelpieces or clothespins. The danger of treating an object as if it were an idea is that one may make it more refined, more insubstantial, than it deserves to be. Ramsey is better when he moves in the other direction, and treats ideas as if they were objects. I think it is because this direction is toward the concrete, because the abstract language has an available and defined reference, that I do understand and like "Theotokos":

Stillness attires the Uncreate.
Eternal Act and Mary wait.
Later the Birth, the Way, the Tree.
Being itself comes here to be.

But if problems occur in Ramsey's sense of the way objects may be used in poetry, the problems are hardly confined to him. He is still trying to make sense, and to argue that the way of making sense is to state a logical and supportable relationship. The relationship is to be made explicit, and then is to constitute the meaning of the poem. I don't think that Ramsey succeeds entirely, because I don't think that he has quite enough substantial things to say, but I do think he is probably more successful than the pure thing-in-itself poets, and I think so in spite of the fact that I find them easier to read.

Let me take up Harrison first, who seems markedly the weakest of these three writers, being, as far as I can see, both humorless and pretentious. There is a certain pompousness in a statement that begins,

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"Tree, arrows are made from you." The intention seems to be not only to teach the tree something, but to bully it a little in the process. At any rate, and whatever the tree must feel, a very strong sense of the Poet, the Definer, is expected to appear. That sense, with its self-consciousness, and its disproportion whenever it deals with self, is notably present in the following passage:

> I think of the twenty thousand poems of Li Po
> and wonder, do words follow me or I them—
> a word drunk?
> I do not care about fine phrases,
> the whoring after honor,
> the stipend, the gift, the grant—
> but I would feed on an essence
> until it yields to me my own dumb form . . .

It is tempting and easy to dramatize the early part of this passage. Harrison (whose name is James on his title page, but the chummier Jim on his book jacket) thinks about the twenty thousand poems of Li Po; we do not know whether he thinks about them one at a time or all together. In any event, he is moved to wonder: *do words follow him?* There has been an unsavoury little scene on the Spanish Steps, when a word he had seen earlier at the Colosseum (the word "nubile," as it happened) approached him with an improper solicitation. . . .

If I am unfair to Harrison, it is out of a sense that he has hardly yet been very fair to himself, or to his reader. But his sense of the importance of the thing itself is shared by much more capable writers. Oppen and Reznikoff have been around for a good while now, and have had time to think carefully about and work carefully with this concept of the thing as governing. If the conception is to work anywhere, it ought to work here.

And for a time, it must be admitted, it does. It is possible to be convinced by either of these books, though I think that in the long run the conviction will turn out to be mistaken. What convinces, in Oppen's work, is the sense of immediate pleasure:

> In the small beauty of the forest
> The wild deer bedding down—
> That they are there!

This passage argues for a kind of poetic response very different from the traditional sort. It argues that the poet is not required to convince the reader of the validity of his observation or his vision, but is required only to *assert* that such a validity exists. It is an approach very familiar from the work of Kerouac, where the reader is probably better off if he is not familiar with a particular place that is being described. If the reader does know the place, he will all too quickly recognize that it is not in fact there in recognizable terms at all. What *is* there is an emotion which may have been evoked by the place or may have

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been simply attached to it, as shadows are sewed to the feet in *Peter Pan*. In any event, the relationship between the object and the emotion it evokes is arbitrary *to the reader*. When the thing in itself is dominant, it becomes almost unnecessary to explain why the thing should produce certain effects, be seen in certain ways. Not how or why they are there is the matter in question; only *that* they are there!

In Oppen's work, the assertion of immediacy is made the excuse for a number of deficiencies. There is little in the way of connection present here, though the suggestion of connection is continually present. Sentences are set up in which a complicated syntactical relationship is predicated, but in which a different and simple relationship takes place. The sense of shifting relationship shows in this passage:

> Van Gogh went hungry and what shoe salesman
> Does not envy him now? Let us agree
> Once and for all that neither the slums
> Nor the tract houses
>
> Represent the apex
> Of the culture.

I may indeed agree with Oppen's conclusion, but hardly with his assumption that he has proved it true in his statement about Van Gogh and shoe salesmen. Is that statement in fact true? Is it useful? The relationship looks as if it should be a supported argument, when in fact it is more of an accidental collision of objects. Such collisions seem to me to make up a very large part of Oppen's work.

Oppen, then, asserts things as if they were relationships, as if their slightest juxtaposition necessarily conveys meaning. Reznikoff uses a more sophisticated and a more readable approach, though it too is finally one which I think is both partial and deceptive.

Testimony is, if its book jacket can be trusted, dependent on actual court records for the period of American history it covers, 1885-1890. And certainly it *sounds* like the court records or the court testimony:

> At a station
> where the stagecoach had stopped at twilight
> the driver saw that there were no lamps on it
> and called for two lamps;
> the superintendent brought them
> and put them on,
> but one was out of repair
> and was not lighted.

It is this flat, prosaic dependence upon the exact object, size, number, amount, that is intended to lend conviction; if something is described as plainly as it is here, can it be other than entirely real? And it is easy to accept the assumption: this is not only the tone of real legal reports, it is their usual substance. This, we may say, is what a five-year period

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went to law about, recorded in its dossiers. It is, then, what the period was.

But of course such a conclusion is very misleading indeed. What legal testimony can give us in any period is only a very distorted view of a society. And what testimony which has been carefully chosen with an eye to disaster can give us is more partial still. If Reznikoff's account were taken as correct, the period from 1885 to 1890 would be so filled with murders, castrations, and dismemberments, that people would have had time for no other activity at all. Reznikoff cites his disasters, and since he cites only disasters, leaves it to be inferred that his picture of the period is complete. It is certainly vivid, but I am afraid that it is also dishonest, that its evasion of explicit comment can only mislead the reader into accepting a very simplistic kind of moral perspective indeed.

However much I distrust Oppen's and Reznikoff's conclusions, I have to allow them the hard-edged brightness that comes from conviction. What they are doing may be misleading or perverse, but they are at least sure of what it is they intend to do. My next four poets are not as convinced as that, and, as a result, their work tends to wander. The wandering comes about not when they describe objects as much as when they try to comment on them.

With Roseliep, the problem is that of finding a direction, a means of approach, a valid language. (The problem is in a sense epitomized by the jacket of this book, with its curious assertion that "His poems are close-packed and sharp-edged, truly word-music rather than faint imitations of music-music.") But what Roseliep's word-music seems to amount to is a confusion of the possibilities offered by things and by commentary. He feels an obligation to comment, but he feels that the reality from which one *can* comment lies with things. Therefore he makes his things didactic, and in so doing, makes them often unbelievable. As in this passage, from "The Bathers":

> The last man threw his body across
> a thicket of water and he dove
> as a lover as reckless in love,
> with wilderness flesh to the Christfish.

Surely a mistake is occurring here, and one which I think belongs to a sort of poetic arrogance. Such arrogance assumes that the poet is absolute master of the things he talks about, and thus, if it suits him, can make a "thicket of water," since neither the thing "thicket" nor the thing "water" has much substance of its own. Roseliep might very possibly be better off in a poetry of almost pure comment, where he would not feel obliged to take all these things with him. That he does feel so obliged, that under that obligation he comes up with such strained conceptions as "wilderness flesh" and "Christfish," indicates the extent to which the domination of things has now extended. So,

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too, does the presence of a number of not every effective haiku, poems which depend not on abstract statement, but on description and implication. The assumption that objects will give solidity, the assumption that a poem which *expects* objects to be present will for that reason be a more definite poem, seems to underlie a haiku like this one:

PACT

Let's exchange poems
as Hamlet and Laertes
exchanged forgiveness.

Oppen and Reznikoff know a thing when they see it; on the basis of this poem I don't know whether Roseliep does. But I do think that he feels only things are poetically acceptable.

What happens with Roseliep seems to me also to happen with Wallace, Miss Randall, and Mrs. Mueller. For although the poets are intelligent and alert, although they want to do right by language and ideas, there is either a flatness or an awkward strain when it comes time to relate things and concepts. The strain shows in the first passage here, which is Mrs. Mueller's, the flatness in the second and third passages, which are from Miss Randall and Wallace, respectively:

(1) The first they knew the curve of Paradise
was when they lost it, when the toxic fruit
shared by two children, burned their childhood down . . .

(2) Should I say
This—with the apple tree—was Sirmio,
This—with the two-year parsley—Twickenham,
Aldworth, or Abbotsford, I would only mean
We lease one house in love's divided name.

(3) That much for sure, though the sandpipers
that rolled in a row
before a wave up the beach might have been
Baird's or White-rumped, or some other,
for all of Roger Tory Peterson.

The naming of places and of varieties of sandpiper, the suggestion that the fruit of Paradise is responsible for the fall—in each case the author is depending on nouns, on things, again. But because these things do not seem to have a very real or very immediate relationship to the author himself (Sirmio still belongs more to Catullus than to Miss Randall) the substance of the poem is not made impressive and strong.

It is this sense of relationship between a single thing and a single observer that seems to me notable in Miss Bishop's book, and in the dozen new poems included in Simpson's collection. We find Miss Bishop talking about hail as "the biggest size of artificial pearls./

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Dead-white, wax-white, cold—/diplomats' wives' favors/from an old moon party." Or we find Simpson thinking about a chair: "But he has furnished his room/With a chair and table./A chair is like a dog, it waits for man." In each instance it has become important both to see the object, and to think what it is *like,* what its most accurate connections are with the other objects offered by our experience. When Miss Bishop discovers a Brazilian nostrum called Electrical Baby Syrup, she has found an object with a remarkable number of possible connections. Surely Sirmio can neither surprise us nor extend our minds as much as can the hypothetical existence of an electrical baby.

Simpson and Miss Bishop are serious, but so were Roseliep and Miss Randall. The difference comes, I think, in the extent to which Simpson and Miss Bishop are *curious.* They find out things. When we find, in the first poem of Miss Bishop's book, the speaker disembarking at Santos, accompanied by a Miss Breen, we expect to find out who Miss Breen is; it is the kind of thing Miss Bishop would want to know and want to tell us. Miss Breen is, as it happens "about seventy,/a retired police lieutenant, six feet tall,/with beautiful bright blue eyes and a kind expression." There! Like the Electrical Baby Syrup, she is something of her own, something it was worth finding out about.

I think too that to Simpson and Miss Bishop the existence of a thing is not static, but involved in a succession of actions: meetings, comparisons, balances. There is this one thing, but there is also something else. A poem of Simpson's uses the exact phrase:

LUMINOUS NIGHT

I love the dark race of poets,
And yet there is also happiness.
Happiness . . .

If I can stand it, I can stand anything.
Luminous night, let fall your pearls!
Wind, toss the sodden boughs!

Then let the birch trees shine
Like crystal. Light the boughs!
We can live here, Cristina,

We can live here,
In this house, among these trees,
This world so many have left.

This sense of motion, of engagement, is so strong in James Dickey's work that it largely dominates the book. Things exist here largely as parts of experiences, of something that is happening, that is verb-dominated, moving forward fast. The objects are often perfectly ordinary, not observed with special closeness:

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where the fly
Hones his front legs where the hammock folds
Its erotic daydreams where the Sunday
School text for the day has been put where the fire
Wood is where the payments
For everything under the sun
Pile peacefully up.

But when, in the same poem, "The Firebombing," we are involved in motion, activity, relationship, the change is extreme:

As I sail artistically over
The resort town followed by farms,
Singing and twisting
All the handles in heaven kicking
The small cattle off their feet
In a red costly blast
Flinging jelly over the walls . . .

Dickey pulls objects out of expected relationships, as he does here with the cattle. And as the object is torn out of its usual surroundings, energy is released—a spark, an explosion.

Like Simpson, Dickey is interested in exploring the possibility of dream worlds, situations in which the conventional patterns of relationship are replaced by others which may prove more meaningful. And to Dickey, memory too has something of the same comparing, releasing function that the dream may have: the worlds of past and present are regularly involved in a tensed relationship here. Dickey himself, at the conclusion of the long, incredibly active poem called "The Shark's Parlor," makes the relationship explicit:

Blood hard as iron on the wall black with time still
[bloodlike
Can be touched whenever the brow is drunk enough: all
[changes
Memory:
Something like three-dimensional dancing in the limbs with
[age
Feeling more in two worlds than one in all worlds the growing
encounters.

The sense of relationship which Dickey suggests here is very much the kind of thing that I expect poetry to accomplish. The poet has done his work most completely when he has been able to show us the object not in one world but in two, when we sense not only the object, not only usual relationships, but the possibility of further extension, of further and more comprehensive relationships: "in all worlds the growing encounters."

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LAURENCE LIEBERMAN

Wisdom and Wilderness

> Wisdom and wilderness are here at poise,
> Ocean and forest are the mind's device
> But still I feel the presence of thy will.
>
> —Yvor Winters (on Melville)

I HAVE OFTEN FELT (and who hasn't?) that modern American poetry needs the severest taskmaster it can find. For many poets, the staunch exemplar of discipline today is Mr. Yvor Winters. As much as any teacher of poets, perhaps more than any other, he has taken a hand in the shaping of today's craftsmen in verse. His influence has made its way into the contemporary British ear principally through the poems of Thom Gunn, a onetime pupil. I recall with pleasure Gunn's affectionate poem in *The Sense of Movement* likening Mr. Winters to the stern keeper of a dog kennel. I should guess that every poet who has worked with him has been shaken into a tougher grip on the tools of his craft.

In his books of criticism, Mr. Winters often presented an unpopularly harsh view of poets in vogue, and he grew to be regarded by many as a sort of literary curmudgeon of his age. The following categorical remarks in a new book on modern American poetry[1] seems to echo the voice of Yvor Winters:

(1) Stevens, who ceased to believe in the God of Christianity and found that there was nothing left to believe, filled the void with his own inventions.

(2) Robert Frost discovered at an early age that he had an engaging personality. The discovery was unfortunate . . .

(3) He [Frost] is happy enough that the mind should be there, but he takes care never to extend it or put it under strain.

(4) Love was clearly a principle of order in Roethke's poems, but it never established itself as a relation beyond the bedroom.

(5) But when we read Whitman with our own scruples—such as they are—we often feel that a more scrupulous poet would have made more of what was there . . . he scants the verifiable past, and the loss to his own poetry is grievous.

(6) Robinson at an early age came to know certain things, and he thought that there was nothing else to know.

[1] CONNOISSEURS OF CHAOS, by *Denis Donoghue*. Macmillan. $5.95.

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(7) Emily Dickinson carried very little theological freight. . . . She moved very lightly in matters of religion. It is unlikely that she had what Yeats called 'a talent for conviction.'

The critic laments Whitman's neglect of history, Stevens's preference for aesthetics over Christianity, Dickinson's laxity—and even deliberate heresy—in her approach to the Puritan tradition, Robinson's indifference to "Eliot's revolutionary poems," Frost's lack of intellectual rigor and his failure to rise above "the middle style," and Roethke's scarcity of human protagonists. He seems perplexed that so much great poetry could have been nourished in a wilderness. It would seem that in the wilderness of American tradition, he often cannot see the trees for the woods.

Denis Donoghue is an Irishman who brings to his studies in American poetry a rare set of qualifications. He has written an excellent book on modern British and American verse drama and a collection of critical essays on Yeats. It is not surprising that such a man would make uncompromising demands of the modern poets. Moreover, there is another factor that very likely carries much weight in accounting for his stern expectations from poetry. In an article on Hannah Arendt published in a special British Number of *Poetry* (May, 1962), Mr. Donoghue reveals his *Weltschmerz* in regard to contemporary poets:

> . . . while reading Hannah Arendt I had the disturbing impression that she had far more to say—more of humane relevance—than any ten contemporary poets. In comparison with her mind most of the literary minds on current exhibition seemed thin, slack, frivolous. This impression came more in sorrow and dismay than in anger.

At another point in the article, it becomes apparent that his sorrow is not so much a matter of his disillusionment with poets, or poetry; rather, he has suffered a crushing blow to his faith in the imagination:

> . . . there are facts, situations, events with which the human imagination cannot cope. I had always assumed that the imagination was good enough for anything, and I had been delighted by Stevens's picture of reality and the imagination in dynamic poise, the violence within *grappling with* [italics mine—L. L.] that other violence which is its occasion, its challenge. . . . But Hannah Arendt is right; the human imagination is dazed by the reality of the concentration camps: it staggers, doubts its own evidence, lurches in torpor or hysteria. It cannot disclose the real.

In *Connoisseurs of Chaos,* Mr. Donoghue returns again and again to the favorite recipe from Wallace Stevens noticed above, but with a difference. As we can see, the two violences in Stevens are reality and the imagination. In the new collection of essays, reality and the imagination usually have an altered relation. Instead of "grappling with"

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each other, imagination is seen to be "holding," "pressing back against," or "defending against" reality. Mr. Donoghue continues to have affection for the concept, and to find it useful, but he applies it with less conviction.

The altered phraseology implies the view that poetry in our time retreats from the terrible facts of our lives. Imagination becomes a way *out*, not a way *in*. Poetry, ideally a way of embracing even the most painful reality, becomes a protection, a form of escape. For Donoghue, this abuse of poetry reaches a ghastly limit in poems by Stevens and Frost which touch on the subject of war. Frost is guilty of "complacency," and Stevens pushes his handsome theory "to the strange conclusion that the mind's defense against the terror might well be successful—even in the case of war."

Mr. Donoghue gives a very high estimate of the achievement of each of the poets dealt with at length in this book, and he demonstrates an evident grasp of their uncommon beauties. The samples of criticism presented early in my discussion were the severest examples I could find, extreme random statements pointing to Mr. Donoghue's strongest reservation about each poet, finally. I think the hidden source of all of these negative statements is his longing for a completely humane poetry, as revealed in the essay on Hannah Arendt ("if they [contemporary poets] have any contribution to make to human survival then please hurry up"). Though I must take exception with some of his specific complaints, I think he is chiefly right in his feeling that there is a serious gap between the concerns of our best poets and the most important experiences of our time, and this is a major source of strength in his criticism. Further, when Donoghue insists that poems must not be content to remain "essays in self-indulgence," but must grapple with the terrors of the concentration camps, it is his faith in poetry that is speaking, not his disillusionment.

Nearly every poet in the collection is viewed, at one point or another, as an instance of Stevens's idea that all art is a fortress that the imagination constructs to fend off the chaos of experience, or in Winters's phrase, wisdom is matched against the wilderness. For much of the book, Donoghue, in his affection for the art of poetry, seems to become satisfied, and to forget our deepest trouble. In the introduction to the book, he even takes refuge (and we join him!) in poetry's escape-hatch: "Literature helps us to live our lives, by offering us instances of the productive imagination at work." But in the essay on Hannah Arendt, Mr. Donoghue is unwilling to settle for any indirect or second-hand solution to the disease of modern man's spirit. The imagination must cope directly with the most terrible facts. Perhaps it must draw the "violence without" into itself and transform it into a quantity that the mind of man can apprehend, or perhaps it must fortify the mind to a degree of toughness that can withstand that violence (those facts) without turning away from it in defeat.

I think there are at least two modern poems in English that achieve

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this for a reader, Yeats's "The Second Coming" and Frost's "The Most of It." Though it may well be that Frost is guilty of complacency about war in other poems, he is certainly guiltless in this one. It is true that the poems refract the terrible facts of experience through symbols, the "rough beast" in the one, and the "great buck" in the other. But in both the refraction takes place without loss of intensity. The raw facts *are* disclosed. Direct references in art to the bomb, to Auschwitz, always seem to call up the sort of numb disbelief that we have come to adopt as a protection against terror. In the poems by Frost and Yeats, the symbol surprises us into the terror of the inhumane in all its original force, reminding us that we have suppressed the humane impulse to indignation that atrocity should always arouse. For me, as a reader, these poems achieve this effect more powerfully than do the writings of Hannah Arendt.

I have pursued these considerations at such length because I feel they are central to the author's point of view in all of his recent essays. It is precisely his struggle to plumb the depths of each poet's capacity for humaneness that makes *Connoisseurs of Chaos* an enormously valuable book.

But I must quarrel with a couple of Mr. Donoghue's critical methods. While he chides the best American poets for ignoring the mainstays of poetry in the Anglo-American tradition—the Past, Christianity, earnest commitment to ideas, humane social awareness—he overpraises poets like Frederick Goddard Tuckerman and Herman Melville for undermining the "sentimental" traditions of the Nineteenth Century from within.

Tuckerman was a connoisseur of silence in an age of noise. He created a quiet splendor out of his refusal to sound the trumpet of metaphor, analogy, correspondence. Theoretically, he might have followed Whitman's lead, making a clean break with the genteel tradition. But he was not fitted by temperament to enter a new world expanding without limit. Instead, he settled for less and less, remaining within that tradition and rejecting most of its favorite tools with a deepening honesty and sorrow. And towards the end of his life, he made better and better poetry out of less and less, identifying finally with the cricket in his greatest poem—"each a fretful, noisy being, speaking to deaf ears." (The quotation is from Mr. Donoghue.)

Tuckerman was ignored for several generations. Only recently has his work begun to elicit the attention and interest it deserves. Like many a late literary find, his importance will be exaggerated by at least one generation of scholars. In the end, we will probably have to look to Mr. Yvor Winters for a balanced judgment of Tuckerman's work. Mr. Winters, in his quiet way, has been introducing Tuckerman's poetry to his students at Stanford for many years. He has tested his growing awareness and appreciation of Tuckerman's achievement in the classroom, while most of his colleagues seemed but remotely aware that Tuckerman had ever lived. Now Mr. Donoghue has done the

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best job to date (to my knowledge) of defining Tuckerman's place in the tradition. It becomes doubly clear why Tuckerman did not win an audience for his work. He could not hope to earn the admiration of the audience for the old guard of the genteel tradition (Emerson, Longfellow, etc.), since he repudiated the "entire myth of correspondence" that engaged their interest. Nor could he share the new audience that had become intoxicated with Whitman's vast inclusiveness. Since he had no public life as an artist, he would become more and more arrested by the virtues of private life, and he would achieve art from a keenly honest examination of the condition of loneliness. I have taken some liberties in interpreting Mr. Donoghue's text, connecting a few circuits where he had installed loose wiring of implication. Certainly, he has helped me to see Mr. Tuckerman's position in American letters better than I had ever seen it before. But it is evident that the claim he makes for Tuckerman is too high.

He assesses this poet's value largely in an aesthetic vacuum. He lifts the exacting strictures that he apparently reserves for poets of the first rank (Whitman, Dickinson, Frost, Stevens, Roethke). He does not examine the texture or language of the poetry. There is less tendency to compare this poet with others, to classify, to rank—to fit him into a sort of hierarchy of saints. Mr. Donoghue is more willing to inspect Tuckerman's talents exclusively in their own backyard, so to speak. If one considers this essay alone, one appreciates the justice of it, the judicious fairness to a poet who has been so underrated, rather overlooked, for so many years. But as a part of the collection of articles, one is struck by a certain disproportion: Tuckerman is the only American poet considered at some length whose genius is not subjected to severe qualifications of one kind or another.

The sort of contradiction that becomes apparent here is, in a way, central to the collection of essays, and perhaps to modern criticism, in general. There is a certain impish pleasure in taking pot shots at authors of established reputation—the snow ball aimed at the top hat —and a commensurate pleasure in disclosing the hidden virtues of consistently underrated authors. The clearest evidence of this tendency in *Connoisseurs of Chaos* is a contradiction in the opening pages of the essay on Melville's poetry. The essay begins:

> It is the common understanding that Melville was a great poet only in his prose. I have no wish to disturb that view. . . .

Three pages later, he is capable of the following:

> . . . he (Melville) wrote hundreds of poor poems and about fifteen poems of the first order that give him a place in American poetry beside Whitman and Emily Dickinson.

Melville's best poems are so very superior to the rest of his work, they seem better than they are. Comparative ranking, whether of poets or of poems by a single poet, often falls into this trap.

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NOEL STOCK

Poetry in Australia

IT WOULD BE ASKING TOO MUCH to expect those presently engaged in the making—I mean both the writing and promoting—of Australian literature to question seriously whether there is such a thing. They are mostly too busy with the job in hand, or defending a position, to consider carefully what they mean when they say "Australian literature."

Meanings, if we pause to think, are concerned not only with words, but with things as well. And things, concrete existence, can limit a meaning, or make nonsense of it, in spite of the user. Saying a thing does not make it true, any more than denying it, if it is there, can make it pass out of existence. And so, when we speak of a new literature or new culture, the context, the already existing facts which help to give meaning to our words, should not be left out of it. Only by taking into account what has gone before can we do justice to what is new. So that those, in other words, who speak of Australian or American literature, if they push the term too far, are denying the context in which their words have meaning.

All this is relevant to the University of California Press's new anthology of Australian poetry.[1] The first volume (1788 to 1930) is in the care of a poet, T. Inglis Moore, who is Professor of Australian Literature at the National University, Canberra, and the second (1930 onwards) of another poet, Douglas Stewart, who is engaged in publishing Australian books. The interesting thing is that what they say or imply about Australian literature being a literature in its own right, is nowhere supported by their own excellent anthology. Their selection can be said to deny that Australian poetry is any different, essentially, from English or American poetry: to deny it in the face of a positive statement by Professor Moore to the contrary and a rather more ambiguous skirting of the issue by Mr Stewart. Professor Moore takes a typical stance. "Australian literature," he says in his introduction, "stands today, like American and Canadian literatures, as a national body of writing in English with its own distinctive character, traditions and idiom." It is no longer, according to Professor Moore, merely a twig on the tree of English literature, but a "lusty sapling" firmly rooted in its own soil. Mr Stewart, who has, we feel, seen more clearly the dangers of such an approach, settles, in his introduction, for an essay in praise of poetry generally, no matter where it has been written. But the anthology rejects outright Professor Moore's contention and mocks Mr Stewart's timidity. For it is really an anthology from one

1 POETRY IN AUSTRALIA. Volume I, FROM THE BALLADS TO BRENNAN, chosen by *T. Inglis Moore*. $5.50; Volume II, MODERN AUSTRALIAN VERSE, chosen by *Douglas Stewart*. $5.00. University of California Press.

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of the English provinces. As in the case of other provinces, whether in England, America or elsewhere, some of it is of purely local or historical interest; but there is a small but definite part which may well be of interest to poetry readers everywhere. The fact that it is called *Poetry in Australia* on the title-page, while both the wrapper and introductions speak of Australian literature as more or less self-contained, only further reinforces our conviction that the facts—the verse itself and the web of history and circumstance which brought the verse into being—are more interesting than the way the editors have seen fit to interpret them.

As a collection for the student who wants to know more than a little about poetry in Australia, or who wants to find his feet before setting off on a more detailed exploration of his own, these volumes will, I hasten to say, prove extremely useful. Anthologies are praised by few and yet for most of us a certain number of anthologies are indispensable. The anthologist's dilemma is that a collection large enough to include all that should be included usually ceases to be an anthology. The anthologist must choose, and in choosing, rejects. Two poems I would have liked to have seen included are "The Rouseabout" (replacing any one of the numerous bad ballads in the first volume), and William Fleming's "The Letter" (for which room might easily have been found in volume two). The latter, although derivative and mannered, is technically more proficient and contains more poetry than almost any single poem in the second volume. It was published in the quarterly *Meanjin* about 1951, so inaccessibility is unlikely to have been the reason for its exclusion. Another poet for whom a place might have been found is Robert Crossland. I know of only one small collection of his poetry, the pamphlet *A Place To Get Lost In* (Cremorne, New South Wales, 1955), but this contains poems better than a number included.

Very useful in a book of this kind are the biographical notes on each poet, marred unfortunately by the inadequacy of the bibliographical apparatus. We are given the titles and dates of an author's books. But what happens when we want to know, as I found myself wanting to, on several occasions, the date of composition or the date of first publication of a particular poem included in the anthology? There is no indication of date on the poems themselves and no indication in the biographical notes whether the poems are taken from the volumes there listed. This is most of the time a nuisance, but occasionally more serious. It certainly detracts from the anthology's usefulness as an accurate survey. Many of the poets represented are unknown, or little known, except to specialists. Unless we are provided with the dates most of us are left without any means of forming even a rough idea of a poet's place in history.

What strikes me most about the collection as a whole is the paucity of verbal creation. The absence of new combinations in which the

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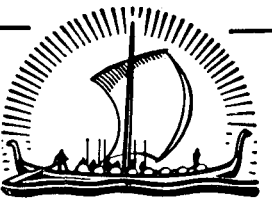

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words, while retaining their everyday meaning, cut into the mind in a new way, or give off an unexpected aura or undertone. You will find in it good poems, good stanzas, good lines, and, here and there, phrases of distinction. If there is much that is bad—of historical interest only—and much that is, by minimum standards, indifferent, yet there are several hundred out of a total of 550 pages in which the experienced reader will find matter of genuine interest and occasionally of lasting pleasure. Henry Kendall (1839-1882), for instance, was a genuine poet. His "Bell Birds" and "September in Australia" are beautiful poems. But the words he uses are, if we pursue a figure which is only very approximate, only old words in old combinations. Or take Banjo Paterson (1864-1941). We may compare him with a much greater writer, Kipling. Like Kipling he is more skilfull with words than many another whom the literary world in its wisdom is pleased to regard as more serious. But Paterson, unlike Kipling, cannot use words for what is inside them as well as for what is on the surface. Henry Lawson also has his moments, but the words he uses, the way he uses them, are not his own.

Even Christopher Brennan (1870-1932), whom Professor Moore says is "accepted as the finest Australian poet," is plodding in his use of language. Not only is his diction sometimes of the dullest, but he wearies the reader with his inability to turn thought and feeling into poetry. He is forever on the brink of an invention that never materialises. The justly famous "torture-point of song," is, unfortunately, his only achievement at that degree of intensity. Brennan may be, as professor Moore suggests, "accepted as the finest Australian poet," but that distinction for me must be reserved for John Shaw Neilson (1872-1942). Brennan, Daley, McCrae, Baylebridge, Gilmore, all of them are inferior to Dowson, for example, in their achievement as users of language. None of them has created a world, as Dowson has, or made poems that can be compared, as poetry, with "Chanson Sans Paroles," let alone "Non Sum Qualis." Neilson, on the other hand, is not disturbed by such a comparison, even if he should prove to be the lesser of the two. Brennan or Gilmore, against Dowson, are untidy: Brennan unable to turn his material into poetry—the material, we feel, may be better than the poetry—and Mary Gilmore too often hinting at more than her words are able to bear. But Neilson, even if he lacks Dowson's polish, survives the comparison; survives it because he was a finished poet who wrote finished poems, seldom or never trying to do more than his verse could stand. It is not without significance, perhaps, that Neilson, who took for granted both the English language and the place in which he lived, is the most succesful of Australian poets in absorbing Australia into his work. He can (in "To a Blue Flower") speak naturally of sheep-shearing and the "heavy scent of the wool," without doing violence to the language, his lyric or his material.

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JON SILKIN

Poems New and Selected (P30)

He turned over on his side with his one year
Red as a wound
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Of later poets—those included in volume two—it is harder to speak. Kenneth Slessor who leads off as Australia's first modern poet, is there by virtue of work first published in the 1930's. Slessor is still an attractive poet, but no longer seems as good as I thought ten years ago. But both he and Robert D. FitzGerald may have suffered unduly in selection. The last two stanzas of A. D. Hope's "Pyramis" are splendid; but where they seemed, when first I read them some years ago, hard and cold, I see now a sentimentality and softness, obscured previously, I imagine, by the fineness of the rhetoric. It is something like Yeats with a dash of Spender's "I Think Continually Of Those Who Were Truly Great":

> I think of other pyramids, not in stone,
> The great, incredible monuments of art,
> And of their builders, men who put aside
> Consideration, dared, and stood alone,
> Strengthening those powers that fence the failing heart:
> Intemperate will and incorruptible pride.

But even as we admire the diction, we are conscious once again of a lack of verbal freshness: the slight twist that makes all the difference. The only poet, actually, in the entire anthology who displays any degree of skill with word-combinations is Hal Porter. In much of his work that I have seen, including his book *The Hexagon*, he is too often eccentric without justification. But in parts of "Sheep" he displays a talent for genuine verbal creation which reminds us of Marianne Moore:

> They teeter with an inane care among the skewbald stones, plead each other's prison names in grey bewildered tones, and thrust their faces—powdered pale and bilious with unease—against the wires of the fence, like haunted internees. . .

In Kendall, Neilson, and one or two others, perhaps, Australia has produced poets who have written their province into the history of English poetry. "Sheep," slight though it is, opens upon the world of artistic creation in which the language is new-minted.

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ROBERT GARIS

Journalist and Critic

As a practical guide for theatre-going, Robert Brustein's column in *The New Republic* has been generally reliable: if you have been following his advice for the past six years you will have seen the important theatrical events in New York and you will have been spared the garbage. You will have seen Lowell's *The Old Glory* in its superior first run and you won't have wasted your money on *Fiddler on the Roof*, despite Zero Mostel. And Mr. Brustein's lively mind, his spirited loves and hates, will have helped keep your interest in the theatre alive. These services, hard to come by in our newspapers and magazines, are things to be grateful for.

But Mr. Brustein has naturally wanted to be more than a practical guide and an effective journalist. He has wanted to be a serious critic and his recent collection of drama reviews[1] presents him as such. His self-portrait will help explain why he hasn't very often succeeded:

> A drama critic working in a journalistic capacity . . . establishes his claim to serious criticism when discussing a genuine work of art, bringing his whole experience and expertise into the service of analysis, illumination, and interpretation. And this is why I bite with such obvious relish into the occasional masterpieces that come my way; and why, lacking these, I often choose to belabor you with extra-critical lectures on the dismal state of our culture, our theatre, and our national spirit. For if the critic is the humble servant of genuine art, he is the implacable enemy of pseudo art, waging war on all the conditions which produce it, including the writer's cynicism, the producer's greed, the actor's ambition, and the spectator's spiritual emptiness.

Mr. Brustein has in fact far too often belabored us with these lectures—"belabored" because despite their energy and volume they add up to little more than an excited manipulation of current clichés about mass culture. One could ignore these tiresome ear-benders if their effect didn't creep into almost everything Mr. Brustein writes. Polemic about the crisis of our culture is actually this critic's main interest: it is a kind of addiction and it has so inflamed his mind that very little calm experience and expertise is on tap when genuine art comes along. More specifically, constant propagandizing for what our dismal culture needs leads Mr. Brustein to a disproportionate emphasis on *theme* and this in turn often leads to an uncritical enthusiasm for those right themes that he believes will restore our culture to health. His relish for what he admires is always energetic but seldom just or il-

[1] SEASONS OF DISCONTENT, by *Robert Brustein*. Simon and Schuster. $5.95.

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luminating, for he lacks the patience—if indeed he has the capacity—to exercise the sensitive disinterestedness that gives serious criticism its authority.

When he is exposing the false or inadequate themes of works of pseudo art Mr. Brustein is at his excellent best, as for instance in a fine long piece about William Inge (which, incidentally, appeared in *Harper's* rather than in his regular column—Mr. Brustein is much better when he has more space and more time). With steadily intelligent analysis he demonstrates that the realizations and affirmations of Inge's plays, and of *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* in particular, are illusory. The complex argument is beautifully managed and the strong conclusions are really earned:

> Compare Inge's with even the most outlandish enactment of sexual relations . . . and you will see where his most serious limitations lie. John Tanner of *Man and Superman* fights to keep inviolable a self which Shaw has shown us in action, writing pamphlets, arguing socialism, speaking wittily and incisively about the lifeless conventionality of his time; the Inge hero, if he struggles at all, fights to maintain an *idea* of self which is wrong from the start. In marrying, Tanner gives up his individual freedom, not his genius; Inge's hero gives up his one distinguishing characteristic, phony though it may be, the sexual dynamism with which he has caught the attention of the spectator. Thus Shaw's vision opens out onto political and moral horizons; Inge's vision closes in on the family and holds us trapped there within the four walls of the home.

"Opens out onto political and moral horizons" is windy, but everything else is sharp and plain and solidly supported by what went before. And therefore when at the end of the piece you read that "William Inge is yet another example of Broadway's reluctance or inability to deal intelligently with the American world at large," you assent immediately to this rational denial of a claim that has in fact often been made in our press. Nothing but clarity and truth can result from this sort of lecture on the dismal state of our theatre. But it is not typical of Mr. Brustein's general procedure. Here is what he is much more likely to be saying:

> But the impact of nihilism on France has also resulted in some of the most original drama written in the last decade, a drama which—in the direction of its thought—would be almost inconceivable in America. For while we are trying to come to terms with human conditioning, the French are trying to pass the boundaries of human limitation; while we are seeking security, ease, and happiness within the social unit, the French are seeking metaphysical freedom outside of human institutions; while our key words are *adjustment* and *affirmation,* the key words in France are *alienation* and *negation.* In consequence, our plays—with their official tone, their pious pro-

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Paris Review Editions, a new enterprise of *The Paris Review* in cooperation with Doubleday & Company, will publish books of outstanding merit in all fields. The books are chosen and edited by an editorial board including staff members of *The Paris Review*. Initial response to the first announcement, made last Fall, has been enthusiastic. We are pleased to announce that the first list bearing the Paris Review Editions imprint will include TLOOTH, a brilliant novel by Harry Mathews to be published late in 1966.

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> nouncements, and their social-psychological orientation—seem to be the work of a collective, embodying the collective's distrust of freedom, heroism, and individual salvation.

To compare highbrow French plays with middlebrow American plays and then to believe that in doing this you are making a significant comparison between France and America, between "them" and "us"—what is this but sleight of hand? What is it, despite its impressive vocabulary, but journalism in the bad sense of the word?

It is no accident of careless writing in this passage that makes Mr. Brustein seem to put an absolute value on the themes of negation and alienation in themselves, instead of on the success with which they are embodied in particular plays. He does the same thing elsewhere, and this bad habit is probably responsible for his enthusiastic but unconvincing overevaluation of Genet. On *The Balcony* and *The Blacks* Mr. Brustein's reviews do render one valuable service—reliable exegesis of obscure material. Thanks to this help, I was in good shape when I went to see the badly-cut New York production of *The Balcony:* I was saved from believing that my own hard work of puzzling out Genet's meaning made that meaning important. Returning to Mr. Brustein's review to recheck his reasons for praising these sterile abstractions and mechanical ironies, I read that the play was "absolutely stunning in its twists and turns of thought" and "highly original in its use of the stage" and that Genet, "who conceives of all life as theatre, is one of the most theatrical of modern dramatists." None of this seemed to me true, but all I could do, in the absence of anything like demonstration from Mr. Brustein, was to disagree—and to note with misgivings the noisy hollowness of the terms of praise. The review of *The Blacks* is more complicated because Mr. Brustein admits that Genet has in this play failed "to integrate his conscious preoccupations with his unconscious fantasies"; nevertheless, "while it fails as a philosophical drama, it stands triumphant as a cruel purgative myth, enlivened by a fierce imagination, a rich theatrical sense, and some of the most superb poetic imagery in all modern drama." The ripeness of this language seems to me what anyone would call journalistic, and the review comes to a characteristically melodramatic conclusion:

> Whatever the evil implications of the play, it is a welcome tonic for a theatre where the Negro lacks any substantiality at all, being either transparent—which is to say, discernible only as an object of White guilt, prejudice, and benevolence—or totally invisible—which is to say, exactly the same as everyone else. In restoring to the Negro his high visibility, Genet inadvertently halts, if only for a moment, that inexorable process of mass assimilation which is draining the color from us all.

With Beckett, whose lucidly ambiguous plays require a less strenuous act of exegesis, Mr. Brustein finds time and space for serious critical

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judgments, which turn out to be rather stern ones—surprisingly so, coming as they do from a critic who really admires Beckett and who is indulgent enough to welcome Genet's failed philosophical drama with its evil implications as a "tonic" and a "triumphant . . . cruel purgative myth." But sterness isn't the same as critical rigor or sensitivity, and Mr. Brustein's analysis of Beckett is so perfunctory, his discriminations between the plays so crude, that one cannot escape the suspicion that again it was initially the themes of negation and alienation that found favor. Then, as Mr. Brustein tired of the key words, he tired of the plays:

> What of Beckett? He is obviously in a dilemma. Like Ionesco, he has a single, all-encompassing vision of existence which leads him to seek out not new themes but new metaphors with which to dramatize the same theme. But, again like Ionesco, he has so successfully persuaded us of the validity, coherence, and theatrical relevance of this vision that we are impatient when he repeats the lesson. Ionesco's recent work has exposed his severe limitations, and I doubt if he will ever be much more than a stunning secondary dramatist. But Beckett, with his superior power, beauty, and intelligence, has the capacity for greatness; and it is saddening to see him coast along on what he already knows.

Mr. Brustein's word "lesson" is appropriate enough to Ionesco's work, with its insistence on theme and its relative poverty of imaginative life, but not to Beckett's, which really merits the great word "vision." It is odd that Mr. Brustein should interchange these two words so carelessly, but much is odd in this revealing passage. Perhaps Beckett does consciously seek out new metaphors; I don't know how he works; but when the curtain rises on *Happy Days* (the play Mr. Brustein finds self-imitative) and the woman embedded in the earth up to her waist says "Another heavenly day," the relation between her circumstances and her radiant tone—her entire personality and attitude—makes a new effect and therefore a new meaning in Beckett's work, unless the word "meaning" in art refers only to the kind of reductive paraphrase that shows up in Mr. Brustein's predilection for key words. And *Happy Days* continues with other new effects and new meanings.

But the critic for whom themes in drama are lessons to be learned would be impatient with *Happy Days* even if he agreed with me that it is one of Beckett's best plays. Despite protestations to the contrary, he has a very short attention-span for single works of genuine art and therefore has developed only minimal expertise in dealing with that internal imaginative life of drama which alone can create a valuable artistic embodiment of a significant theme. Praising the economy of *Krapp's Last Tape,* Mr. Brustein compares it with *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame,* which "for all their poetry and insight, were ultimately marred, I think, by their length. It is one thing to affirm that life is a

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string of aimless, inconsequential, and monotonous events; it is quite another to produce and reproduce these events upon the stage." It is Mr. Brustein's fixation on theme that has produced this astonishing reduction of Beckett's meanings, and the marred dramaturgy of these two plays likewise seems to me to be the failure of the critic rather than the playwright, whose plays are full of interesting events, meaningful human behavior and human relationships, a wide range and a supreme flexibility of feeling and tone—and a sure instinct for dramatic structure. Mr. Brustein is as unresponsive to all this when he is praising *Godot* as when he is faulting it, and he is unresponsive because he doesn't pay attention. He finds, for instance, that the language of *Happy Days* is "flat and prosaic" in comparison with the "poetic intensity" that "ennobled" *Godot,* and here is his example of the latter, *verbatim:* "they give birth astride a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more. . . . The gravedigger put on the forceps." No wonder Mr. Brustein finds *Godot* monotonous, since he hasn't followed its action and since his sense for dramatic poetry is as crude as his sense for theme. For that ellipsis in his quotation is of quite an unusual kind: the words before the four little dots are spoken by one character, Pozzo, the words after by another, Vladimir. This fact should matter even to someone who gives only lip-service to the principle that dramatic poetry arises not out of figurative language and eloquence *per se,* but out of the relation between language, character and action. In this case that complex relation makes all the difference. Pozzo is a very special character indeed: he is the rhetorician, the melodramatist, and also the sadistic exploiter of the play. His words quoted above are spoken, after he has gone blind, in a passionate fury of nihilism; and just as the striking calamity of this brutal man's blindness stands in strong contrast to the milder quotidian discomforts of the two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon, so his striking imagery stands in strong contrast to most of their language. How to take these contrasts is no unambiguous matter, but the characterization surely controls our response to Pozzo's language, and that control just as surely works against our wanting to use the word "ennobled" at this point. And the play's action is important here too. The second part of Mr. Brustein's quotation is spoken by one of the tramps after Pozzo has left the stage: Pozzo's furious language has infected Vladimir with the strongest anguish he feels in the play, but the infection is only temporary, and its value is certainly ambiguous. In short, Pozzo's imagery is not *better* than the "flat and prosaic" language of much of the rest of the play; you could argue that in fact it is worse; in any case, it is *different,* and the nature and value of that difference is very delicately rendered and questioned. It is such wonderfully eventful writing as this that makes Beckett the best playwright going, and it is to such events that Mr. Brustein shows himself not only insensitive but inattentive. His excitement about Pozzo's noble imagery is as undiscriminating as his excitement about Genet's cruel purgative myths. A serious critic needs finer equipment than this.

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